

SIR WILLIAM TEMPLE

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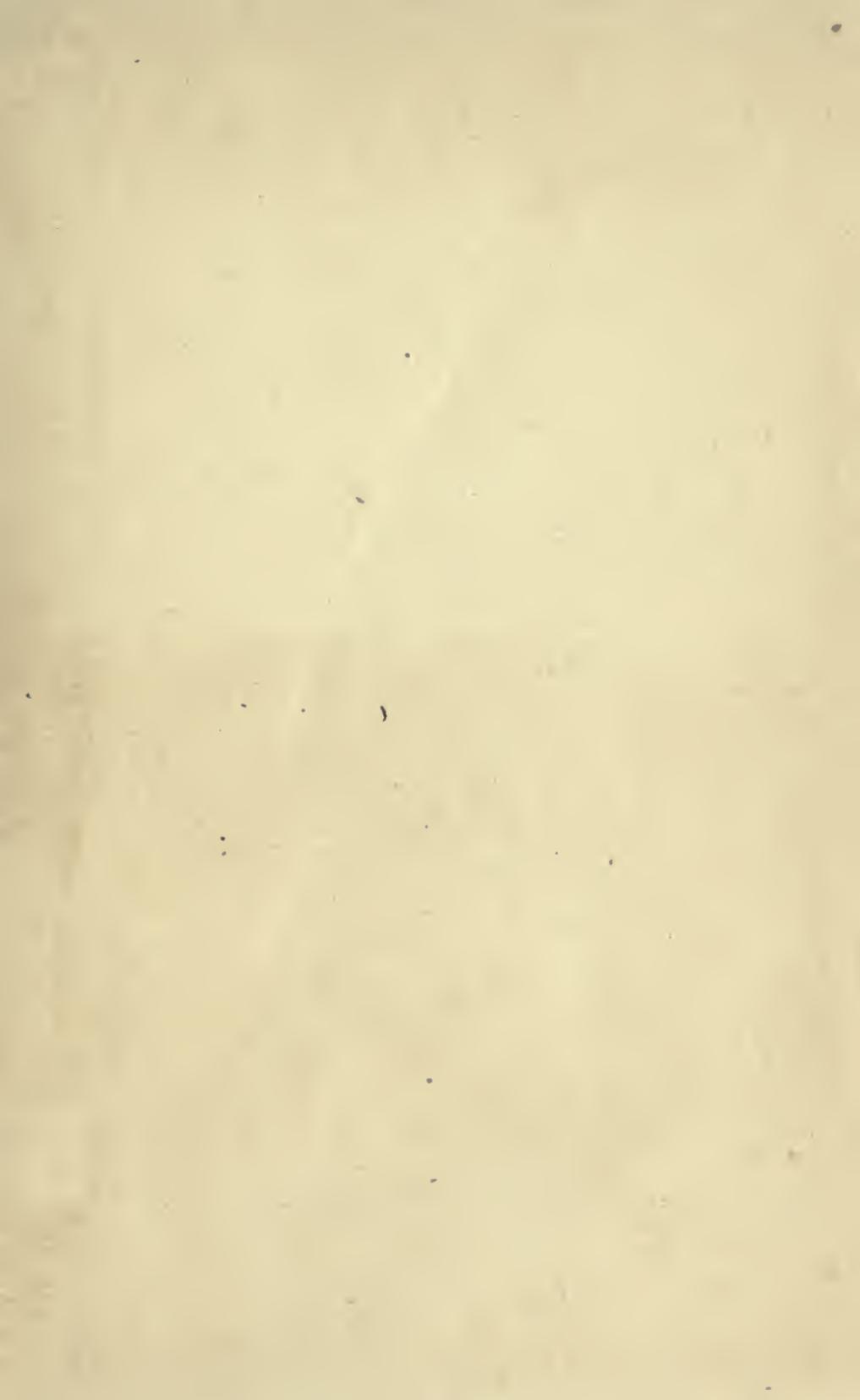
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THE STANHOPE ESSAY

1908

BY

EDWARD S. LYTTEL

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

‘Exeat aula
Qui vult esse pius.’

LUCAN.



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PREFACE

THE writer of this essay wishes to record his gratitude for the generous assistance in the form of corrections and suggestions which he has received from Richard Lodge, M.A., LL.D., Professor of History in the University of Edinburgh, formerly Fellow of Brasenose College, Oxford.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE,
OXFORD,
June, 1908.



SIR WILLIAM TEMPLE

'Fame, at the which he aims—
In whom already he's well graced—cannot
Better be held, nor more attain'd, than by
A place below the first.'—*Coriolanus*.

OF the famous names which are lastingly inscribed on the long and glorious roll of British statesmen, some will invite us to conjure up pictures of men who claim an additional meed of admiration because, in their climb to the Temple of Fame, they had to conquer great difficulties and to dare great dangers. Other names, again, will be represented by figures which stand out less clearly in the historical pageant because they to some extent failed to surmount the adverse conditions of their times, or because they were overshadowed by their contemporaries.

In the latter class we may include the subject of our essay. Sir William Temple had many great qualities, but in the picture of his times he appears as a rather dim and expressionless figure, which is apt to sink into grey insignificance behind the lurid hues of a Charles II., the chiaroscuro of a Shaftesbury, or the splendour of a Louis XIV.

He loses, too, rather than gains, by closer examination. His name is connected in history with important

political events; but these not only depended really on the dominant policy of bigger, if less high-principled, men, but by their very fugitive nature they robbed him of some of the glamour which attends a lasting success. He was the diplomatic agent for the Triple Alliance, and it failed. He was sent to Nimeguen, and the result was a hollow and uncertain peace. He helped to plan a new Privy Council, and it was but the plaything of an hour. It is true that in none of these cases was the failure entirely, or even partly, due to himself; but the fact that they did fail makes him appear as rather an ineffectual figure, even if his ineffectiveness was caused chiefly by the chicanery of a Stuart or the ambition of a Grand Monarch.

Yet his work had its value—and no small value—in the promises it held for posterity. The Triple Alliance failed, but it created a precedent which has lived and worked wonders. The Privy Council failed, but it helped the growth of our Constitution by marking what was then its weakest point. His literary work was not epoch-making, but in very essential details it opened out new possibilities and new beauties.

In this partial success and partial failure we may see an index to Temple's character and abilities. He had many of the qualities which the future admired: he lacked some which the present demanded. In some respects he was a remarkable figure among the statesmen of his generation: in others he dwindled into insignificance. He had something modern in his character, as in his prose. He lived fastidiously, and practised unfashionable virtues. He was courteous in manner, tactful and persuasive in speech, prudent and sagacious in business, wise in the knowledge of the times, and adroit in choosing the right moment to press forward.

or to stand aside. He was, therefore, well qualified to excel as a diplomat, and he did excel. If he owed to good fortune the opportunity of identifying himself with the more respectable treaties in the reign of Charles II., he owed to his own good qualities the smoothness and rapidity with which those treaties were effected. If he had retired when his diplomatic career was ended, he would have been saved many heartburnings and many censures.

But he allowed himself to be drawn into the troubled field of domestic politics, and here the weak side of his character showed itself. He was loyal, but his loyalty was passive rather than active. He was faithful, but his faith lacked enthusiasm. He had the refined nature that shrinks from factions, and the sensitive nature that recoils from rebuffs. He had the contempt of a cultivated and enlightened man for fanaticism, and was not one to risk his comfort for a creed, his good name for a principle, or his head for a party.

In his intermittent appearances amid the intrigues of foreign politics he commands our admiration. In his brief and unhappy appearance in domestic politics his timidity and caution cause that admiration to be tinged with a feeling which is almost contempt.

I

‘The behaviour of the young gentleman gives him out to be of good capacity and breeding.’—*Twelfth Night*.

THOSE who seek to trace the influence of heredity in determining characteristics of thought and action may perceive in Temple’s ancestors men who would be likely to transmit to their descendant unassuming but constant feelings of loyalty, moderate political views, a respectable degree of eminence, and an honest love of a country life refined by a not unworthy amount of literary taste and skill.

His family were what we should now call ‘county folk,’ who ‘pretended to most ancient nobility.’¹ His grandfather was a scholar and philosopher, secretary to Sir Philip Sidney, and Provost of Trinity College, Dublin; his father, Sir John Temple, was Master of the Rolls in Ireland, a distinguished member of the Privy Council at Dublin, and the author of a History of the Irish Rebellion. Sir John joined the popular side in 1640, was imprisoned for opposing the Cessation, regained his liberty by exchange, and sat as a ‘recruit’ in the Long Parliament. He voted with the Moderate party; he was with them ‘secluded’ by the high-handed action of Colonel Pride; and he finally returned to a more settled Ireland, to hold once more his post as Master of the Rolls, and to sit as a representative of

¹ ‘Life of Sir William Temple,’ by Lady Giffard, prefixed to the 1731 edition of his Works.

County Carlow in the Irish Parliament. He married the sister of Dr. Hammond, a celebrated divine, and their eldest son, the future statesman and author, was born at Blackfriars in London in the year 1628.

William Temple received his early education at Penshurst, in Kent, under the care of his uncle, Dr. Henry Hammond, and at the age of ten was sent to school at Bishop's Stortford, where he learnt all the Latin and the very little Greek he ever knew. The standard of learning at this establishment does not appear to have been very high, for at the age of fifteen he had 'attained to all that was to be learned there,'¹ and returned home to wait till the violence of the Civil War had sufficiently abated to allow him safely to go to a University. In 1644 he was entered as a fellow-commoner of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, where he remained for two years. He was under the care of the celebrated Cudworth, the author of 'The Intellectual System of the Universe'; but he appears to have devoted his attention more to tennis than to philosophy, and left the University without a degree, and with even less knowledge of Greek than he had before.

England in 1648 was a dismal place for a Royalist, and Temple soon started to travel on the Continent. On his way to France he passed through the Isle of Wight, where Charles I. was still confined as a prisoner, and there met, and made friends with, the son and daughter of Sir Peter Osborne, an ardent Royalist who had earned a small niche in the Temple of Fame by his dogged defence for the King of Castle Cornet, in Guernsey. Dorothy and her brother were equally warm partisans of royalty, and the latter amused himself by writing on a

¹ 'Life of Sir William Temple,' by Lady Giffard, prefixed to the 1731 edition of his Works.

window-pane of the inn his opinion of the ruling powers : ' And Haman was hanged on the gallows they had prepared for Mordecai.' For this act of malignancy the party were arrested and brought before the Governor ; but Dorothy, with ready wit, and a singular trust in the gallantry of a Roundhead, took the offence upon herself, and was immediately set at liberty, with her fellow-travellers. This incident made a deep impression on Temple. Dorothy was young, of much personal attraction—though in her letters she often naïvely wishes she were more handsome—and her companion's admiration quickly ripened into love. We have no account of how the courtship progressed, or whether Temple had become her 'servant'—as the phrase went—before he parted from her and proceeded on his travels ; but when he returned to London, after spending two years in seeing France, the Netherlands, and Germany, and in acquiring a competent knowledge of the French and Spanish languages, he corresponded with Mistress Osborne as an accepted lover. But the course of their love did not run at all smoothly. Dorothy's father was a Royalist ; Sir John Temple had been sitting in the Long Parliament ; and even when the war ended objections came from both families, for the Osbornes were violently set against a marriage with a comparatively poor man, and Temple's father also had a more advantageous alliance in view for his son. In spite of opposition, however, the correspondence continued. Temple's letters have, unfortunately, been lost, but Dorothy's have been preserved, and the course of the long and arduous wooing can be traced in the delightful collection which has been given to the world. We learn how her brother Henry was especially vehement in his opposition ; how he gave her 'a pretty lecture, and I grew warm with

it'; how he finally made a personal attack on the religious opinions which Temple's turn for philosophical inquiry had made suspect, and how 'I forgot all my disguise, and we talked ourselves weary; he renounced me again, and I defied him.' We learn how she was tempted by a succession of more wealthy suitors, and how near she was to high places by being wooed by her cousin Thomas Osborne, afterwards Earl of Danby; and by Henry Cromwell, who gave her an Irish greyhound, won her cordial liking by the bright and courteous demeanour which gained for him the title of a 'debauched, ungodly Cavalier'¹ from that strict Presbyterian Mrs. Hutchinson, flattered her vanity by offering her the addresses of a son of the Protector, but altogether failed to win her from her constancy to Temple.

These letters, however, do more than give us an account of a troubled courtship. They have a charm of their own; they give us pleasant glances at the social customs and manners of the time, and present a very attractive picture of Dorothy herself. They are written in an easily flowing and sprightly style, which is a delightful contrast to that of the rugged, harsh, and involved epistles of most of the writer's contemporaries, and they combine the subtle and quaint charm that lingers about old letters with the spirit and freshness of letters written yesterday. In them Dorothy passes lightly over all kinds of topics, and is by turns tender, serious, wise, gay, and satirical; at one moment in tears over the cruelty of a brother, at the next laughing over the recollection of an absurd sermon; here giving us a dainty picture of Chicksands and its 'common that lies hard by the house, where a great many young

¹ 'Memoirs of Colonel Hutchinson,' vol. ii., p. 203 (Firth's edition).

wenches keep sheep and cows, and sit in the shade singing of ballads'; there a demure lecture on the duties of a husband: while a good deal of gossip, a little scandal, some coquettish raillery, and a few blushes at the terrible word 'love,' are mingled in most admired confusion with some unpretentious but practical philosophy, and a few very earnest and sincere thoughts on religion. There is not a dull letter in the whole collection, and altogether they give us a living portrait of a very sprightly and lovable girl—modest, affectionate, generous, sympathetic, and womanly—who was generally cheerful, always intelligent, and never ill-natured.

The majority of the letters were addressed to Temple in London, where he seems to have spent his time in the usual round of town gaieties; but as Dorothy laughingly twits him as 'a young man whose head is so taken up with little philosophical studies, that I admire how I found room there,' he evidently found time for a good deal of solid reading. He appears to have been a faithful and ardent lover—almost too ardent for Dorothy's somewhat prim notions—and his constancy was eventually put to a severe test; for when the pair had at length triumphed over all opposition, Mistress Osborne fell ill of the small-pox, and, though she escaped with life, she lost all her good looks. But the writer of such letters as Temple had received had other beauties than those of face and form by which to hold the affections of a man of his character, and the faithful lovers were at last united in 1654.

In the following year they went to Ireland, where they lived alternately at Sir John's house in Dublin and on an estate in Carlow. Here Temple spent his time chiefly in reading, gardening, and, 'to please his wife,' in writing some indifferent verses and translations. He

was anxious to enter public life, and his travels had given him a taste for, and some knowledge of, foreign politics ; but—to quote his own words—‘ the native love of my country and its ancient constitutions would not suffer me to enter into public affairs till the way was open for the King’s happy restoration.’¹

When his wish was realized, and Charles Stuart sat once more on the throne of his ancestors, Temple joined his father in the Irish Parliament, where he seems to have displayed moderate powers of eloquence, but a ‘tongue persuasive as a woman’s,’ a useful asset for a future diplomat. He was soon, however, to gain a wider sphere for his powers, and we must now briefly describe the state of politics which he found on his arrival in England in 1663.

¹ Dedication of *Memoirs* [Works, i. 373 (1720).]

[N.B.—Future references to Temple’s works will be marked ‘T. W.’ and will refer to the folio edition, in two vols., of 1720.]

II

‘The world has seen
A type of peace.’

SHELLEY.

THE year 1660 saw Charles II. welcomed with a frenzy of loyalty by the Royalists, who greeted his restoration as the triumph of the old order over the Sectary, the Democrat, and the Republican. The year of Temple’s arrival in England saw the ‘Cavalier Parliament’ leading the way in the long struggle which was to end only in the third great charter of our liberties ; which was to give new definitions to the terms ‘Prerogative’ and ‘Parliament’ ; which was to transfer a large share of the sovereign power wielded by Cromwell’s political army from Whitehall to Westminster ; and which was to prove that there was no room in England for a second Charles I., a second Strafford, or a second Laud.

The struggle was a hard one, for the restored monarch was a true Stuart. He was, indeed, above all things, determined never to ‘go on his travels again’ ; but, behind ministerial cat’s-paws, he aimed at that Catholic despotism which was then considered to be the ideal polity in the greatest Continental nations. He had to inspire him two great examples of autocratic power—in Cromwell, with his glorious government by means of a standing army ; and in Louis XIV., with his magnificent absolutism established on the ruins of the Fronde. His cousin in France was also a Catholic, as well as an autocrat, and Catholicism was the religion of his mother,

of his well-loved sister, and of the Courts at which he had spent the greater part of his exile. Small wonder, then, that Charles, as a man, was always—at any rate, potentially—a Papist ; as an English King, was eager for Catholic toleration, till the Test Acts taught him the hopelessness of his attempts;¹ and, as a European monarch, was always inclined to an alliance with France rather than with Protestant Holland. Small wonder that the struggle between the Executive and a Legislature that had not yet forgotten the Gunpowder Plot was but accentuated by religious differences. And Parliament's first step towards limiting the King's power only forced him into a position where his plots against Church and State became still more dangerous. The abolition of the old feudal dues had fulfilled its object in weakening the idea of the King's Prerogative, but the substitution of an inadequate revenue, by men who were ignorant of finance,² not only made a desire for money the one constant factor in a policy which, in other respects, Charles often pursued lazily and intermittently, but it drove him into the arms of a monarch who would be more likely to help the cause of kingly power than the cause of constitutional and religious liberty.

But when Temple appeared on the scene in 1663, the struggle which was to colour the whole of the reign of Charles II. was as yet only outlined in men's minds. The alliance with France had, indeed, been foreshadowed,

¹ It is a moot question whether Charles' final decision to abandon any overt action in favour of the Roman Catholics dates from the Test Act in 1673, or from the Popish Plot and 'Disabling Act' of 1678. The majority of historians favour the first date.

² Pepys was assured by Sir Philip Warwick, Chancellor of the Exchequer, that the revenue fell short by a fourth of the £1,200,000 voted by Parliament (Diary, March 1, 1664).

but at present the aim of Charles was rather against Holland than against his Parliament; for he had a very clear insight into the commercial needs of his people, and realized that the destruction of the Dutch Republic would mean the undisputed predominance of the navy, which had been brought into such prominence by Blake—the predominance of England as the greatest commercial nation of the world, and the growth of her power beyond the seas. This aim, to his credit be it said, he kept constantly before him in his dealing with Louis—at any rate, during the first part of his reign.

It was in connection with England's renewed strife with her great trade rival that Temple first appeared on the diplomatic stage. He had remained quietly in Ireland while the Restoration was being bloodlessly effected; while the Bill of Indemnity was kept within the spirit of the Declaration of Breda, by the efforts of Charles and Clarendon; while the 'lion' of military Republicanism 'sprawled its last' in the rising of the Fifth Monarchy Men; and while the Corporation Act began the list of Anglican measures which were to stifle desires for comprehension or toleration. He would have followed with the peculiar interest of a student of foreign politics the birth of a new Anglo-French agreement in the Portuguese marriage, and the sale of Dunkirk; and the first signs of a reversal of the traditional Stuart policy of non-intervention in Europe by a King who had come to his throne without foreign complications or foreign assistance, but who had thus early begun to give up his ready-made isolation.

When the Irish Parliament was prorogued in 1663, Temple removed to England, and settled with his family and his widowed sister, Lady Giffard, at Sheen, where he spent a large part of his time in his favourite hobby of

fruit-growing. Ormonde, who seems to have had a lasting affection for 'the only man in Ireland who never asked him for anything,' had given him letters of introduction to Clarendon and Arlington ; but it was not till two years later that the Dutch war supplied an occasion for his first diplomatic mission.

It was not, however, with Holland alone that foreign complications had arisen. The Peace of Westphalia had marked the beginning of a new phase in European history—the beginning of a long period of French aggression. The Continent had been dominated by a Hapsburg : it was now to be terrorized by a Bourbon. The proud Spaniards, by their racial spirit of individualism and self-sacrificing obstinacy, had enabled their country to impose herself on Europe for many years after the basis of her ephemeral power had decayed ; but—though she was still suffering from that ruinous popular obsession which made her, like Don Quixote, blind to the realities of life, to her national poverty, impotence, and ignorance¹—her glory had in reality departed ; her armies had been shattered at Rocroy and Nordlingen ;² she had been forced to abandon her struggle with the United Provinces ; and Portugal, whose unwilling union under the Hapsburgs had marked the zenith of her fortunes, was to mark their nadir at the battle of Villa Viciosa. The other branch of the Hapsburgs also was but a shadow of its former self : for the Empire had practically disappeared ; it had become a lax confederation

¹ Cf. 'The National Significance of "Don Quixote,"' by Major Martin Hume (*Fortnightly Review*, October, 1907).

² August 3, 1645, when Enghien defeated Mercy. The first and more famous battle of Nordlingen was fought on September 6, 1634, when the Emperor beat the Swedes under Bernhard of Saxe-Weimar and Horn.

of small despotisms, with little or no nexus of national feeling ; and it had in Sweden a victorious enemy who controlled the mouths of two of its great rivers and commanded two votes in its councils. And the peace which marked the decline of Spain also marked the first triumph in the advance of France. The frontier policy of Richelieu, by which Paris was to be made strategically as well as historically the centre of France, had resulted in a successful struggle for the Rhine, for the razor's edge on which have hung suspended the issues of war and peace for nearly 250 years, and of which the danger is still acute.¹ But the way to the second great frontier objective was still blocked by the Spanish Netherlands. A step in the right direction had been gained at the 'Pax Infida' of 1659 ; but, as Bourbon had contended with Hapsburg for the Rhine, so France, in trying to win her way to the Scheldt, was to be confronted, during thirty years of intrigue and war, by the United Provinces.

At present, indeed, there was peace between the two countries, for Louis XIV. realized that an Anglo-Dutch war was inevitable ; and, though he was anxious to see Holland weak, he was also anxious that England should not become too strong. But, though he was even persuaded by De Witt to make a treaty with the United Provinces, the time was almost ripe for the war of devolution ; and French influences and the danger of French ambitions loomed large on the political horizon when Temple went on his first diplomatic journey.

The Dutch war of 1665 was but a recrudescence of the one in 1652. It was the inevitable result of a peace which had left untouched the original causes of enmity, and which had exacted a confession of inferiority from a high-spirited people. 'France they distrust, Spain

¹ Lord Curzon on 'Frontiers' (Romanes Lecture, 1908).

they despise, but Holland they hate,' said Ruvigny of his hosts ; and the English nation was driven by colonial and trade jealousy towards a renewed conflict with its rivals ; the English King had his own dynastic quarrel with the Republic for its 'Act of Exclusion' ; and the English navy was only too ready to be used as a stimulus for war, instead of, as now, an insurance for peace.

Temple's first task was a difficult one, and it failed. He lacked the experience which was necessary for coping with the intrigues of able and unscrupulous opponents, but he showed, even in his failure, that he had in him the makings of a good diplomat, and he did well to gain any credit at all out of a situation in which outside influences left him almost helpless.

At the instance of Arlington, he was sent to complete a treaty which Charles had secretly made with Bernard von Galen, Bishop of Münster,¹ a prelate who was 'only considerable by his position' on the Dutch frontier, who was 'unquiet and ambitious to raise a name in the world,' who hated the Dutch for their support of his city against him, and who had both the wealth to raise an army and the military tastes to lead it.²

By the terms of this treaty the Bishop was to attack the Dutch within two months, in return for a heavy

¹ This was a curious alliance between a great Power and a relatively insignificant Prince of the Empire. Von Galen appears to have taken the first step, and to have been bold enough to hold out hopes of German hostility to Holland. As a matter of fact, the Princes of the Westphalian Circle had not been approached, had only recently been induced by Louis XIV. to retire from an alliance with Holland against France, and were from the first cold to England, and, after the first campaign, openly hostile. (*Cf.* C. Brinkmann in *English Historical Review*, October, 1906.)

² T. W., i. 85.

subsidy. Temple was sent to complete the details of the alliance, and to hand over the money.¹ He had also to see that the conditions were kept, and in this he was successful beyond the expectations of the English Government, for the Bishop was persuaded to take the offensive before the time agreed upon, and his troops captured Zutphen, and overran the province of Overyssel. Louis had now to yield to the repeated entreaties of De Witt that he should fulfil the treaty of 1662. The French King feared to lose England and her neutrality in his design on the Netherlands, but he was afraid that this design might be imperilled by the spreading of the war, or by the complete conquest of the Republic, and he therefore sent help to the Dutch. His troops, indeed, openly cursed the cause of their nominal allies, and his officers successfully avoided attacking the Bishop's troops ; but the prestige of the French alliance so strengthened the hands of De Witt that the neighbouring German Princes were induced to bring pressure to bear on Münster.²

Temple made fervid appeals to the Bishop to keep faith with England,³ and finally hastened to Münster itself ; but his dangerous journey through country infested by the troops of the hostile Princes was undertaken in vain, though his account of it provides us with a vivid description of the habits of his Teutonic hosts

¹ Cf. Arlington's Letters, p. 9 *et seq.*, June 22. Arlington placed an exaggerated value on the Bishop's services.

² The German Princes, both Protestant and Catholic, agreed together in this case, impelled by fear of an imminent French invasion, and by sympathy for Holland. (Temple to Castel Rodrigo, December 2, 1665.)

³ Cf. Dryden, 'Annus Mirabilis,' stanza 37—

'Let Münster's prelate ever be accurst,
In whom we seek the German faith in vain.'

en route, who 'had the most episcopal way of drinking possible,' for they used a silver bell 'holding 2 quarts or more,' which each guest first emptied, and then rang 'to show that he had played fair.'¹

On arriving at Münster, Temple found that the Bishop had already consented to the withdrawal of his troops, and the harassed Ambassador had to leave secretly and in haste in order to gain 'some small satisfaction out of the adventure'² by intercepting part of the subsidy which was on its way from England.

Temple's first official appointment thus ended in failure; but his Government seems to have been not dissatisfied with his efforts in a very difficult situation,³ and he was soon sent to Brussels, where he began that serious diplomatic career which led him to the famous but fleeting Triple Alliance.

The first Dutch war of the Restoration period was less successful than the one fought under the Commonwealth. England was richer, but King and people were not in that complete accord which is necessary for a great national undertaking. With Parliament interfering and suspicious; with Charles lazy and spendthrift, and—as Pepys says—'minding his pleasures and nothing else'; with London panic-stricken by the plague and in ruins after the Fire, it was an inglorious treaty which was signed at Breda: inglorious not because of its terms—for it gave us the 'Middle Colonies' in America, and therefore ranks with the planting of Virginia and the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers in our colonial history—but because of the disgraceful event

¹ Letter to Sir John Temple, dated Brussels, May 10, 1666.

² *Ibid.*

³ 'I am glad the farce is at an end,' wrote Arlington to Temple, April 27, 1666.

which led to it. But the English desire for vengeance on the Dutch for De Ruyter's exploit at Chatham was temporarily obscured by the pressing danger of the French advance.

Louis XIV. had succeeded to the policy of the Cardinal's era, but with the additional incentive of youthful ambition and of an assured position at home. No longer was there a struggling Holland to protect, an overbearing Spain to resist, a Condé or a Retz to subdue. With home difficulties at an end, and with the possession of absolute power over a people who were 'as little considerable in the government as the children,'¹ the Bourbon King could devote himself to that policy of territorial aggrandizement which had been foreshadowed in the threatening legend inscribed on Mazarin's Rocroy medal—'Prima Finium Propagatio.'

The marriage of Louis to the eldest daughter of Philip IV. had cemented the Treaty of the Pyrenees, but it had also opened the way for a Bourbon claim to the Spanish dominions; for, though the marriage treaty had renounced any such claims, the statecraft of Mazarin had ensured a loophole by which this renunciation might be rendered invalid.²

The birth of a male heir to the Spanish throne put a temporary stop to Louis' designs on Madrid, but he was not to be balked of his pressing desire for the Scheldt frontier, and in the War of Devolution he put forward a claim to the immediate sovereignty over the Spanish Netherlands—a monstrous claim, which was

¹ T. W., ii. 92.

² Mazarin procured the insertion of a clause in the contract by which the validity of the renunciation should be dependent on the punctual payment of the marriage dowry. The first instalment had not been paid when the ceremony took place.

founded on a mere local custom of land-tenure, but for which Louis had a strong argument in the shape of Turenne and his army.¹

With Charles Stuart secured by a secret understanding, with Holland as his nominal ally, and with Spain rendered still more helpless by a Franco-Portuguese understanding, the Bourbon King had only to neutralize the opposition of the Emperor before setting out to 'travel,' as he called it, in the country which he claimed as his wife's inheritance. By the lavish expenditure of gold the Princes of Mazarin's Rhine League were induced to renew for a time their alliances with France; and, with his right flank thus protected from Austrian attacks, Louis swooped down upon the defenceless Low Countries, and began that advance which was to continue till William of Orange, as combined Dutch Stadholder and English King, checked his career. In vain Spain ignominiously freed herself from her entanglement with Portugal, and called on Leopold to defend the Netherlands, which, as part of an imperial 'circle,' were nominally under his protection.² De Gremonville

¹ The *nominal* claim of Louis was for part only of the Spanish Netherlands—*i.e.*, for Brabant in particular, and for a few other places, such as Antwerp, Malines, and Limburg. The local custom in these districts in regard to *private* property was founded on the 'Jus Devolutionis,' by which rights of succession went to the children, male or female, of the 'first bed,' to the exclusion of those of the second. Hainault was similarly claimed for the first family on the ground of its special custom, while feudally a third of Franche-Comté was held to belong to the Queen of France. Luxemburg, again, had its own custom, by which a son had two shares, the other children the remainder. Of this Duchy therefore, the Queen could claim one quarter. (*vide* Kitchin, 'France,' iii. 167).

² By the Treaty of Münster, October 24, 1648, the 'Circle' of Burgundy was to remain a member of the Empire after the

—perhaps the ablest of the French Ambassadors—was equal to the occasion, and the Emperor was persuaded by the use of diplomacy, not unmixed with downright lying, to agree to a treaty for the partition of the Spanish dominions. With Holland, too, Louis had come to an understanding ; for, in view of the general excitement of Europe at his advance, and in return for the assurance of Dutch support, he had agreed to offer a compromise to Spain on the basis of the ‘alternatives’ of either keeping what he had already conquered in the war, or of holding Franche-Comté and some fortresses on the frontiers of the Spanish Netherlands.¹

While Louis was thus giving the law to Europe, Temple was the accredited Envoy at the Viceregal Court at Brussels. His delight at being appointed to a post which had been the great ambition of his youth was increased by the unexpected honour of a baronetcy, and Sir William settled down with his family in Brussels to watch over Spanish neutrality in the Anglo-Dutch war, to promote a good understanding between England and Spain, and, later on, to mediate between Spain and France. In Castel Rodrigo he met a very able Viceroy, who was quite willing to converse freely with the courteous Englishman ; and Temple gained a clear view of the political situation, and a very real sense of the imminence of the danger from France. He perceived that Louis was trying to delay the termination of the Anglo-Dutch war till he had made a great impression on the Netherlands, and he became convinced of the neces-

close of the Franco-Spanish war, the Emperor and the Empire binding themselves not to interfere in that struggle (Meiern, Register, p. lxxvi ; Kitchin, ‘France,’ iii. 98).

¹ Cambrai and the Cambrésis, Douai, Aire, St. Omer, Furnes, and Bergues, with their *dépendances*.

sity of a close alliance between the two great naval and Protestant Powers. In this view he was soon strengthened by a conversation with the Dutch Ambassador at Breda, to which town he had gone for the peace negotiations. Holland, indeed, had become alarmed at the rapid success of Louis and Turenne, and when Temple journeyed incognito to the Hague—ostensibly to accompany his sister, 'who wished to see the country she had heard so much about'—he found the Grand Pensionary very ready to listen to his suspicions and suggestions.

This first and informal meeting is of great interest and importance, because it marked the beginning between the two men of a notable friendship which had very great influence on their future diplomatic relations.

There was something very similar in their characters. De Witt 'was as plain, direct, and square as any man could be,'¹ wrote Temple, whose own frankness and honesty were the strongest points in his character. The virtual ruler of one of the richest countries in the world lived as frugally and unceremoniously as a simple burgess; and the English Ambassador, though careful to uphold his dignity, despised the arrogance of display as much as he despised the punctilios of diplomatic etiquette. They were both shrewd, painstaking, and inventive; but De Witt possessed a calm courage in the face of danger that placed him on a higher level than the man who, in later years, showed a certain amount of timidity in a difficult situation.

Between two such men there was cordiality from the first. Each was surprised and pleased at the other's frankness. Temple was acting unofficially, and was therefore rather guarded in his expressions; but De Witt

¹ Temple to Arlington, January 24, 1668.

spoke with the confidence of his position as Grand Pensionary of the predominant province. He denied that he had ever seriously entertained Louis' 'offensive and disgraceful offer' to partition the Spanish Netherlands with Holland, but was unwilling to desert his policy of conciliation towards France. He admitted, indeed, that an alliance between England and Holland was a natural one, for the two countries were connected in blood, manners, and religion, and both required the Netherlands as a barrier against French aggression; but he was sceptical as to the intentions of his late antagonist, and refused to be England's cat's-paw.¹ Temple sent an account of this conversation to Arlington, whose knowledge of languages and of Continental politics had gained for him the position of chief director of foreign affairs since his appointment as Secretary of State. This Minister was at first cold and guarded in his replies, but at length sent an important despatch, which enabled Temple officially to suggest an alliance to De Witt. The reason for Arlington's change of attitude can be traced to the violent anti-Catholic and anti-French attitude which had been recently taken up by the English nation. The growing aversion to 'Popery and wooden shoes'² had bulked large in the divisions of Parliament and in the political disturbances of the London mob. It had also been chiefly responsible for the fall of Clarendon. Arlington had a Dutch wife and some Dutch sympathies, but his chief reasons for secretly negotiating with De Witt came from his desire to thwart a personal rival in Buckingham, and from his anxiety to avoid the fate of the King's late adviser.

¹ Temple to Arlington, January 24, 1668. Also see Temple to Bridgman, January 27, 1668.

² Ludlow, ii. 298.

Temple hurried off to England, and used his powers of persuasion to such effect that he was enabled to return to the Hague armed with full powers to arrange an alliance. Charles showed his usual duplicity in the matter. He was as firmly against Holland as ever, but he was willing to take the line of least resistance, and to throw a sop to the clamorous Parliament; while he secretly hoped that Louis, in his anger at being thwarted, would help him by wreaking vengeance on the Republic.

The story of the negotiations for the Triple Alliance throws into strong relief Temple's character as a diplomat. While various opinions have been held as to the effect of the treaties signed on January 23, 1668, few will deny that the conclusion of such important agreements in the unprecedented time of five days was very largely due to the English Plenipotentiary. He had the good luck to be entrusted with negotiations agreeing at once with his own sentiments, the momentary tendencies of England and Holland, and the general interests of Europe; but De Witt's congratulatory remark that 'it looked like a miracle'¹ shows that the difficulties could only have been overcome by one gifted with very great tact and adroitness. 'It is true that mutual confidence and common interest dispense with all rules, smooth the rugged way, remove every obstacle, and make all things plain and level,' said Burke';² and Temple's success seems to have been due to the fact that in an age of intrigue, double-dealing, and corruption, his clean, straightforward, and honest diplomacy inspired that confidence which begets confidence; while his simple, whole-hearted enthusiasm for

¹ Temple to Arlington, January 24, 1668.

² 'Regicide Peace' ('Works,' viii. 333).

his work, and his almost boyish disregard of ceremony, seem to have carried with him Ambassadors who had hitherto been accustomed to the more frigid and tortuous paths of conventional statesmanship. 'Sir William Temple's address, vigilance, and sincerity are without example'¹ was the official verdict of the Dutch Government; while the general feeling in Holland was one of 'great joy and wonder'² at the result of his efforts.

Before the arguments and persuasions of the English Envoy, De Witt's doubts as to the policy of changing an old and constant ally for a new and inconstant friend, as England had proved, melted away; more particularly as the danger to the Republic in crossing the path of Louis was to be lessened by the inclusion of Sweden in the League, which would then be 'too strong a bar for France to venture on.'³

This addition to the strength of the two naval Powers was secured by the direct personal appeal of Temple to Count Dhona, who was so pleased and flattered at the unceremonious⁴ frankness of the Englishman that he willingly promised to use his influence with his Government. The negotiations for the treaty proceeded apace, and the French Ambassador was for once caught napping. He had kept Louis informed of the

¹ Letter from the States to the King of Great Britain, February 18, 1668.

² Temple to Godolphin, January 28, 1668.

³ Temple to Arlington, January 24, 1668.

⁴ 'That evening I went to the Count Dhona, and ran over all ceremonies of our characters, by going straight into his chamber, taking a chair, and sitting down by him before he could rise out of his. I told him . . . that ceremonies were intended to facilitate business, and not to hinder it' (Temple to Bridgman, January 27, 1668).

progress of what the Bourbon was pleased to term the 'plot'¹ against himself—as if all resistance to France was treason—but he reassured him as to the imminence of the danger, and expressed himself as feeling confident that 'all would end in smoke.'² He was relying on the power of French intrigue during the time which must elapse before the consent of the Provinces could be obtained in the regular constitutional manner; but he had mistaken his man. Temple had too strong a sense of the imperative need for a quick solution of the difficulty, and D'Estrades' cool 'We will discuss this matter six weeks hence'³ was answered by a vigorous onslaught on De Witt's reluctance to break through the existing forms, and a successful appeal for the use in the emergency of the still undissolved secret commission which had been appointed during the late war.

The result was the arrangement in five days of that Concert which, by the formal adhesion of Sweden three months later 'for satisfaction received,'⁴ became known as the 'Triple Alliance.'

Three separate treaties were signed on the same day. The first recorded the conditions of a defensive alliance between England and Holland, while in the second these allies bound themselves to endeavour to restore peace between France and Spain on the basis of the 'alternatives.'

Both these treaties carefully avoided all signs of menace to France, but a sting lay in the fourth article

¹ 'Mémoires Historiques,' ii. 361. Voltaire called the resistance to Louis an 'intrigue' ('Siècle,' p. 99).

² Temple to Arlington, January 24, 1668.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ 'Quo una ex parte obligaretur Rex Sueciæ, mediante satisfactione praedicta ad amplectandum designatum fœdus' (extract from Swedish Act, T. W. ii. 81).

of the second treaty, by which 'media majoris efficaciam'¹ were to be used to compel the acquiescence of Spain, and a cessation of hostilities was imposed on Louis—terms which, as D'Estrades said, 'were not very proper to be digested by a King of twenty-nine years old, and at the head of eighty thousand men.'² But the third and secret treaty was of a still more serious character, and opened a new page in history by the introduction of the idea of that active interference by neutral Powers between two warring States, which plays such a prominent part in modern international politics. It provided that force should be used against *whichever* of the parties refused to make peace on the basis of the alternatives ; and that, if France were the recalcitrant party, the allies were to join with Spain to reduce her once more to the limits imposed by the Peace of the Pyrenees. Holland had thus been induced to change the policy of a hundred years, the French had been outwitted, and Temple had scored a great personal triumph. In our admiration of the English Envoy's success we must not forget that in the broad outlines of foreign policy he was but a passive instrument in the hands of Charles; but we must also remember that for the details of a scheme conditioned by that policy Temple's friendship with De Witt and Temple's ability were mainly responsible. He had justified Arlington's determination to follow Solomon's advice, and to 'send a wise man on an errand and say nothing to him ' ;³ he had gone far to establish the maxim that

¹ Second Treaty, § 4. In the original draft in French the words 'à la force et à la constrainte' were used. These were moderated at Temple's suggestion to 'aux moyens plus efficaces' (Temple to Arlington, January 24, 1668).

² Temple to Arlington, January 24, 1668.

³ Arlington's Letters, March 13, 1668.

'In politics one must always speak the truth';¹ and he had won for himself a European reputation as a wise counsellor, an adroit diplomat, and an honest man. The more pity that he should have afterwards weakened that reputation in the eyes of some of his countrymen.

The Triple Alliance has been idealized as the first great check to the ambitions of Louis XIV., and this view was forcibly expressed by Macaulay.² To the argument that Louis was only compelled by this measure to make peace on the terms which he had offered before it was formed, this writer answered that 'Louis made his offer only in order to avert some such measure as the Triple Alliance, and adhered to his offer only in consequence of that Alliance.' In defence of this opinion, he argued that the annexation of Franche-Comté was one of the French King's favourite projects, and that he was compelled to disgorge it, not from regard to his word—for that had never restrained him—but, as Europe believed at the time, from fear of the Alliance. No one can deny the fact that the world then held this exalted opinion of the famous League, and that the prestige of England was thereby enormously increased; but some will say that this only puts the statecraft of Louis in a brighter light. 'Qui scit dissimulare, scit regnare,' was the advice of his ancestor, and to delude all Europe was no mean achievement even for such a brilliant disciple of Machiavelli as Louis XIV. No one knew better than the Grand Monarch how to temper ambition with caution, and when he had gained immense advantages he could well afford to yield on some points in order to pose as a magnanimous and moderate conqueror. He who would aim at a kingdom will sometimes be content to

¹ Flassan, 'Hist. de Diplomatie Française,' ii. 353.

² Essay on 'Sir William Temple.'

relinquish a province: As Louis himself said, ' Beyond the recognized terms of peace there were others which depended solely from the secret views I at that time entertained';¹ and, with his eyes fixed on the Spanish throne, with its sickly occupant, and with the Partition Treaty with the Emperor in his pocket, he could well afford to laugh in secret at his openly triumphant enemies.

For the Triple Alliance was, after all, not a very serious danger to France. Charles II. was really her friend, and the time was almost ripe for the Treaty of Dover; Sweden was an old ally who had joined the League as a commercial speculation, and could be easily bought off; while even in Holland there was still a large party in Louis' interests..

The Concert of 1668 was of immense importance in providing a precedent for future and more powerful coalitions, but its apparent effect—the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle—appears to have been, on the whole, a victory, not for the Triple Alliance and Europe, but for France. It left Louis with a recognition of part of his claims in the War of Devolution; it contained no word to hamper his claims on the Spanish throne;² and if it marked a check in his advance, that check was but a deliberate halt for the purpose of a broader scheme of aggression.

¹ 'Mémoires Historiques,' ii. 369.

² It practically admitted that his wife's renunciation was invalid, an admission which was also made in the Partition Treaty by his most formidable opponent, the Emperor.

III

‘Mars gravior sub pace latet.’

CLAUDIAN.

‘THOUGH this Alliance was happily planted, yet it was unhappily cultivated,’ says Temple in a characteristic metaphor; and, indeed, ‘the new and uncertain friend’¹ was too soon to justify De Witt’s doubts. The Alliance that Pepys calls ‘the only good thing that hath been done since the King came into England’;² that Burnet calls the ‘masterpiece of Charles’³ life’; that gave Temple what was almost a triumphal procession to Aix—this Alliance was to fall before the unsteady counsels of a King and Ministers who put power before principle, and who were ready to buy the means of misgoverning England by humiliating themselves before France.

The fall of Clarendon had given to Charles what the death of Mazarin had given to Louis XIV.—the power to pursue his own policy, and to be the ‘King, which he had never been before.’ He could now intrigue with his own Ministers for Catholic toleration, and with France for the humiliation both of the Dutch people and of the English Parliament. Louis—with his haughty temper inflamed against ‘Messieurs les Marchands,’ who had tried to ‘stay the course of the sun’⁴—was now to bid high for the English alliance which was to protect his commerce in a war of vengeance; and the price of Charles’

¹ T. W. i. 76.

² Diary, February 14, 1668.

³ ‘History of His Own Times,’ i. 440. ↗

⁴ Ranke, ‘Franz. Gesch.’ iii. 285.

infamy was to be used for an equally unscrupulous attack on the political and religious liberties of a country which hated France, hated Popery, and was eager to preserve the Triple Alliance.

It was no easy task that Charles set himself. Absolute power alone was almost beyond the reach of a King whose mental and moral fibres had been weakened by a long course of debauchery, and the retention of Catholicism as an integral part of his scheme either savoured of insanity¹ or was the bravest thing he ever did. If the latter, he soon shrank back from his own deed, and it was left to his more stubborn, and perhaps more insane, brother to reap the full fruits of the crop of suspicions and ill-feeling sown by Charles' unfortunate attempt.

In entering on the policy of the Treaty of Dover, the King had to contend with divisions in the Cabal itself. Arlington was still opposed to Buckingham, and still

¹ It may be argued—in view of the familiarity of Europe with the idea of ‘cujus regio ejus religio,’ and in view of what had happened in Bohemia and the Palatinate, and was happening in Silesia and Hungary—that Charles’ plan was not merely a wild dream, and that the Popish panic and the Revolution were but the results of England’s sense of the imminent danger of that plan succeeding. To this the answer may be made that England was not the Continent; that her constitutional growth and power of national resistance were peculiar; and that for a King, who had little ‘droit administratif’ left in his hands to try to impose autocracy and Catholicism on a nation which had recently passed through the Civil War, and whose memory of the Gunpowder Plot and the Irish massacres was still vivid, did indeed ‘savour of insanity.’ If the then state of Europe made his plan theoretically conceivable, the state of England made its application to our country practically impossible. The wonder is that Charles, who had often showed himself an adroit politician, should have entertained such a wild design (*vide* Seeley, ‘Growth of British Policy,’ ii., § 3).

opposed to France, and he induced the King to send Temple as Ambassador to the Hague; a step which, considering the late Envoy's well-known sympathies, could only be taken as a determination to maintain the Triple Alliance. Charles, however, only agreed to this—or possibly suggested it—in order to blind the eyes of his people to the fact that he had by now definitely embraced the religion of his brother, and was preparing to put into execution his now definite plan of restoring Roman Catholicism to England with French aid.¹ Arlington, too, was a Catholic, and, on being secretly told of the King's conversion, became an eager promoter of the proposed treaty.

Meanwhile, Temple was doing his best to sustain an Alliance which he was beginning to realize rested on very shaky foundations. Charles, however, was anxious to obtain supplies from the suspicious Commons by being able to assure them with verbal accuracy that the Triple Alliance was still firm; and for a time he managed to hold his balance between Louis and De Witt. He repudiated Temple's action in instigating the States-General to complain of infractions of the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, but he yielded to the urgent entreaties of De Witt that he should offer England's security for the payment of Spain's promised subsidies to Sweden. But, in spite of Charles' lip-service to the Alliance, his Parliament was growing more and more uneasy, and voted such inadequate supplies that the King was driven to the speedy completion of his negotiations with Louis. The threatened arrival of an Envoy from the suspicious De Witt precipitated matters, and the actual arrival of

¹ Charles' definite plan dates from early in 1669, when he had a long consultation on the subject with the Duke of York (see Clarke's 'History of James II.' (1816), i. 442).

Henrietta—whose influence over her late converted brother was as strong as her hatred of the Dutch Republic—helped to put the coping-stone on the protracted negotiations of Arlington and Colbert, and gave the infamous result the popular title of 'Le Traité de Madame'—a name which may be considered doubly suitable when we remember that additional influence was brought to bear on a King of well-known habits by the 'baby face'¹ of the future Duchess of Portsmouth. The inclusion of a clause which bound Charles to declare himself a Catholic gave rise to a humorous piece of by-play, in which the Protestant members of the Cabal were deluded by a 'Traité Simulé';² but it is dangerous to fool some men, and in amusing himself at Shaftesbury's expense the English King was running risks for the future.

At the instance of Louis, Temple was now privately recalled from the Hague. This increased the already acute suspicions of De Witt, more especially as it so quickly followed the French seizure of Lorraine, the visit of 'Madame,' and Buckingham's unexplained visit to Paris.³ The Grand Pensionary anxiously asked for Temple's opinion as to what was going on behind the scenes, but the English Ambassador could only confess to equal ignorance and similar suspicions; and could only promise that, if his Government really in-

¹ Evelyn, November 3, 1670.

² A King may conspire against his own subjects without authority and at his own risk; but even to Charles some decent diplomatic pretext was necessary for making war on an inoffensive State, with whom recent pledges of peace and friendship had been exchanged.

³ De Witt sarcastically inquired from Temple if this visit was merely 'pour voir le païs ou apprendre la langue' (Temple to the Lord Keeper, September, 1670).

tended to desert the Triple Alliance, he personally would never take any part in such an act of perfidy.¹

On his arrival in London, Temple found his worst suspicions confirmed. He was received coldly by Arlington, who avoided all references to 'things material'; while from the King he could only extract a few polite questions as to his journey. Clifford at first was equally elusive, but he was at last committed to an interview, and there gave Temple a glimpse of the true state of affairs by bursting into a rage against the 'company of rogues and rascals' which governed the States, who were unfit for the consideration of Charles or any other Prince.

To this tirade Temple answered calmly, but refused to change his attitude on the subject. He was now quite convinced that a tempest was brewing which would sweep away his labours in Holland, and his natural caution made him make up his mind to 'get a warm house over his head.' He determined to prove the truth of the conviction he expressed in a farewell letter to De Witt, to the effect that he was 'better turned for making a good gardener than an able Minister.' He paid a visit to the King, kissed hands on the formal ending of his embassy, received a few easy and courteous compliments, and then retired to his corner, as he called it, at Sheen.²

In the picture of the times Temple now retires temporarily into the background. He had made his name. He had been feted and flattered abroad, and had been honoured even to the extent of having questions submitted to his arbitration, 'pas comme ambassadeur d'Angleterre, mais comme Chevalier Temple.'³

¹ Temple to the Lord Keeper, September, 1670.

² Temple to Sir John Temple, November 22, 1670.

³ Courtenay, i. 374.



But he was sensitive to rebuffs, and was too vain to wish to see his reputation diminished. He had risen to sudden and deserved fame by the Triple Alliance. The Triple Alliance was doomed, and there would be hard words flying about. He must, therefore, retire out of danger, and he did retire. He spent four quiet and, to him, uneventful years in reading a little, writing a little, and devoting a great deal of time to gaining new fame as a fruit-grower.

Meanwhile the harvest of war and ruin which sprung from the Treaty of Dover was being reaped in Europe. Louis had enticed away the chief member of the Triple Alliance, and had also succeeded by bribes and intrigues in robbing Holland of other possible allies. The first blow in the war of vengeance was struck with dramatic suddenness. As Temple tells us, the English attack on the Smyrna fleet astonished the world like a 'clap of thunder in a fair frosty day.'¹ Even Louis himself appears to have been doubtful up to the last as to the reality of Charles' intentions, and the surprise seems to have almost paralyzed the Dutch. The United Provinces, indeed, were in no condition to withstand an attack. True, they had recovered marvellously from the late war, and were both richer and more populous; but the natural courage of their people had been debased by an excessive absorption in trade, and the anti-Orange policy of the ruling Powers had resulted in an ill-officered and ill-disciplined army, which was quite unable to cope with a Condé or a Turenne. .

It is small wonder, then, that the French troops met with scant opposition as they poured across the Rhine, overran Gelderland, Overyssel, and Utrecht, and swept almost up to the very gates of Amsterdam itself. Indeed,

¹ T. W., i. 379.

had Louis followed the advice of his generals, the city itself would probably have fallen, and the campaign would have been ended at a blow. But the hesitation of the French King gave the Dutch an opportunity for putting into action the plan which was kept for moments of supreme necessity. The dykes were cut, and a waste of sea-water lay between Louis and his goal.

Holland was saved from attack by land, and De Ruyter kept its coasts inviolate ; while the spirit of the Dutch revived under affliction, and their natural courage was hardened to stubbornness by despair. They had, too, an equally dauntless leader. The inevitable reaction against the existing Government had once more put a Prince of Orange at the head of his countrymen—a Prince whose enthusiasm was tempered by intelligence, whose courage was stiffened by unconquerable resolution, and whose patience, persistence, and stoical disregard for bodily weakness made him a worthy descendant of William the Silent.

Under his guiding hand the Dutch boldly faced the enemy, and began to snatch from the hands of Louis the complete victory which had already been stayed by storms at sea and inundations on land. In the face of these difficulties the French King retired to the pleasures of Versailles, for it was no part of the policy of this cautious Prince to take a personal part in operations which did not contain the prospect of immediate success. With characteristic arrogance he had a medal struck in his honour, bearing his favourite image of the all-conquering sun ; but the gallant defence of Groningen was a spot on its brightness, and there was a cloud creeping up from the horizon which, after forty years, was to overshadow its glory. The first coalition of an alarmed Europe was too weak to overcome the genius of Turenne,

though it helped to save the Dutch by drawing off large numbers of French troops ; but a second and more powerful combination was soon ranged against Louis, which in later years brought him to his knees.

Meanwhile in England there was a growing sense of discontent with a war which had been disgracefully planned, treacherously begun, and ingloriously pursued. In a House which justly earned its title of the 'Pensionary Parliament' there were two things, at any rate, which gold could not buy—friendship to the Catholic religion, and friendship to the French Crown ; and though the Dutch war might have appealed to the nation's wounded pride if England had been fighting alone against Holland, yet the power which was to act the part of Rome in Shaftesbury's '*Delenda est Carthago*' was clearly France. Englishmen saw one suspected Papist commanding the nation's fleet and another guiding the nation's counsels, each in the interests of a Catholic ally who was seeking to destroy a Protestant State. They saw the ripple which seemed to presage a coming storm in England rising in France to a wave which threatened to swamp the Huguenots. Small wonder, then, that they scented Popish schemes in every act of the Government ; that they viewed with suspicion the 'dark hovering' of the army at Blackheath ; that they took the first opportunity to challenge Charles on the policy which was foreshadowed by the second Declaration of Indulgence ; and that they made it clear to him that Catholicism in England was a political impossibility. With the fall of the King's domestic scheme, fell also his foreign policy and the Ministers who had helped in its formation. The Cabal ceased to exist. Clifford retired into private life in disgust at the Test Act and the perfidy of his colleagues ; Lauderdale,

Buckingham, and Arlington were in turn attacked in Parliament ; and Shaftesbury, whose cunning had taught him when to leave the sinking ship, was now openly showing in the ranks of the Opposition the acrimony of a man who had thought himself a master of intrigue against the King who had made him his dupe.

The reins of government, so far as they were allowed to slip from the pleasure-filled hands of Charles, were now in the hands of Danby. This statesman shaped his policy on very different lines from those of his political sponsors, Clifford and Buckingham. For the pro-French tendencies of both and the Catholic views of the former he substituted a sincere opposition to the influence of Louis, and a Cavalier-Anglican policy aimed especially against the dangerous clique which owned Shaftesbury as its head.

But while he thus returned to the policy of Clarendon, he was far less firm and uncompromising than Charles' first Minister. He had the independence to shape out a bold policy of his own, but he was too supple and acute not to know when to temper that boldness with caution, and how to safeguard himself against the danger of entire adhesion to one party. He scattered bribes with both hands, but he managed to preserve something of the air of a patriot. He smiled on the policy which brought French gold into his own and his masters' pockets, but he frowned on the alliance which contained the dangerous elements of French Catholicism.¹ He made himself indispensable to the King, but he also made himself grateful to a large section of the House of Commons.

¹ Cf. his toast at a public banquet—‘Confusion of all that were not for a war with France’ (Burnet, ii. 128.)

His administration saw a change abroad as well as at home. It saw the first signs of the approaching transformation by which England's friend and foe in the Treaty of Dover were to change places ; and it saw the first signs of a renewal of the old rivalry of the Hundred Years War.

The Treaty of Westminster marked the return to the old policy of national independence and an understanding with Holland ; it marked the cessation of hostilities between the two great sea Powers whose alliance formed the keystone of the system of Europe in the days of Marlborough ; and it marked the public reappearance of the man who had that alliance so much at heart.

A projected Dutch treaty irresistibly turned men's minds to the author of the Triple Alliance. Temple was called from his retirement by general acclamation, and though he ' feared that he was grown a little rusty by lying still so long,'¹ he performed the required task with his accustomed ability and dispatch. Holland and Spain had been engaged for some time in the hopeless task of trying to arrange at Cologne a general peace between France and the members of the Coalition ; they were especially anxious to see the two naval Powers once more at peace ; and Temple had little difficulty in arranging, in three meetings, satisfactory terms for the treaty. But though Charles had been driven to this step by the ' necessity of his affairs, the humour of his people, and the instances of his Parliament,'² active warfare was but supplanted by even more active intrigue. A peace which was ' huddled up ' without the knowledge of either the Swedish mediators or even the English plenipotentiaries at Cologne, was followed by treacherous

¹ Temple to Sir John Temple, February 17, 1674.

² T. W., i. 376.

dealings with France, in which Charles first tried to soften the blow of his desertion by continuing to help his late ally with men, guns, and secret information, and then tried to turn his position to account by putting England's neutrality up for sale. And a dishonest King was faced by a corrupt and unprincipled Parliament. Now it was that Clifford's bribery of the great men was extended by Danby to the rank and file. Now it was that foreign customers flocked to share in '*le sale trafic*,' and that English, French, Spanish, and Dutch gold jingled in the same pockets. For the anxious gaze of Europe was fixed on England, on the country whose weight might pull down the balance of power to the side of the Coalition. Charles had ceased to aid Louis. Would he be compelled to strike on the other side, or would he be forced to dissolve Parliament in order to bury England's present hope of active intervention under the civil discords which bade fair to attend a General Election ?

The answer to this question was eagerly awaited in Continental councils, and nowhere more eagerly than at The Hague, where the promoter of two Anglo-Dutch treaties was conferring as Ambassador and friend with the Prince of Orange.

For soon after the Treaty of Westminster, Temple had once more crossed to Holland as England's representative. His now greatly enhanced fame had brought him the offer of a Government post as Secretary of State, but he was more at home in the cool air of diplomacy than amidst the heated factions of home politics, and he gladly acceded to Charles' request that he should offer England's mediation to Holland and France. But he had learnt from experience how prone was the King to a 'fatal turn of counsels,' and he determined that this time he would 'know the ground on which he stood.' In a

long private audience he took occasion to tell Charles how ill-advised he had been 'in breaking measures and treaties so solemnly taken and agreed.' The King characteristically laid the blame on his Ministers, and said that 'if he had been well served, he might have made a good business enough of it.' He, however, went on to justify a good deal what was past, and this roused from Temple a determination to 'go to the bottom of that matter.' He earnestly represented that it was impossible to set up in England the same religion and Government that was in France, because the 'universal bent of the nation was against both'; and in England, at any rate, it was not the nobles and clergy only who enjoyed political significance. He concluded this, to Charles, somewhat tedious discourse by quoting a remark made by M. Gourville—'the one foreigner I know that understands England well'—who said: 'Qu'un Roy d'Angleterre qui veut être l'Homme de son peuple, est le plus grand Roy du monde; mais s'il veut être quelque chose d'avantage, par Dieu il n'est plus rien.' Charles showed some signs of impatience during this lecture, but his natural good-nature and—dare we whisper it?—his sense of humour came to the rescue, and at the end he laid his hand kindly on Temple's, saying: 'Et je veux être l'Homme de mon peuple.' This answer from the lips of a King who, in all probability, had the draft ready for the next year's Non-Resistance Bill, and who was about to make yet another secret treaty with Louis, might with more honesty have been, 'I will be,' not 'the *Man*,' but 'the *Master* of my people,' and it is possible that his hearer was not very much impressed with a sense of Charles' sincerity.¹

¹ T. W., i. 383. Temple's opinion of Charles was largely coloured by his strong Royalist sentiments, but he describes him

The embassy of Temple which followed this conversation was rendered memorable by his connection with a matter which was of vastly greater importance to England than the Triple Alliance. The marriage between William of Orange and Charles' niece Mary was the outcome of that opposition to the Crown which gained impetus, not so much from popular antagonism to an unprincipled King who aimed at increasing the Royal Prerogative, as from a sense of the danger which lay in his family connections. Not only was Charles half a Frenchman in birth and breeding, but the hated French had a still more deeply hated religion—a religion which was openly avowed by James and his new wife. The one hope of the Protestants lay in the Anglican children of Anne Hyde, and to whom could the Lady Mary be more suitably mated than to William of Orange, who was half an Englishman, of royal rank, and the great representative in Europe both of the Protestant cause and of the opposition to French ascendancy? Danby had persuaded Charles to disregard the opposition of Louis and James¹ to a marriage which had such obvious advantages for England, but William had at first refused the proffered alliance—nominally because 'his fortunes were not in a condition for him to think of a wife,'² really be-

('Works,' i. 449) as a King who 'desired nothing but to be easy himself, and that everybody else should be so;' who 'was very easy to change hands . . . so that nothing looked steady in the conduct of his affairs, nor aimed at any certain end; . . . whose easy and inglorious humour has made him lose many great occasions of glory to himself, and greatness to his Crown.'

¹ Reresby, in his 'Memoirs,' p. 109, says that James had hopes of marrying the Princess Mary to the Dauphin, thus making England a province of France; but this statement must be received with caution.

² T. W., i. 397.

cause he was doubtful as to the advisability of binding himself to a Court which, as he thought, was running counter to the wishes of the nation.

In the second year of Temple's embassy, however, he appears to have begun to view the idea more favourably, and asked Temple for his advice. The English Ambassador was naturally delighted at the prospect of a union which would strengthen the bond between the two nations, and assured William that his fears for the position of the Crown in England were unfounded, and that even the Shaftesbury faction—who had been intriguing with the Prince—would be hard put to it to find 'an ill side to such a match.' Temple was also able, on the authority of his wife and sister, to satisfy William's natural curiosity as to the appearance, character, and disposition of his prospective bride; and the result of the interview was that Lady Temple sailed almost immediately for England, carrying with her letters which opened negotiations with Danby.¹ It was not till the following year, however, that the Prince crossed to Harwich, and posted 'like a hasty lover' to the Court. Temple was then in England, for he had been sent for to receive a second request to accept the post of Secretary—a request which, though strongly preferred by a King who was evidently anxious to secure the tranquillizing presence of the diplomat in his discordant councils, was again, and as firmly, refused. In the negotiations for the marriage Temple acted as intermediary between Charles and William, and though to Danby must be given the chief credit for the management of a union which Louis felt 'as he would the loss of an army,' the intimate and trustful friendship between Prince and Ambassador was by no means an unimportant factor in the comple-

¹ T. W., i. 415.

tion, with the necessary haste and secrecy, of one of the greatest of the royal marriages which have determined the course of international history.

In the following year Temple returned to the Hague on his way to Nimeguen, to the congress whose long-drawn-out and intricate negotiations were finally to end in a hollow and uncertain peace.

The Anglo-Dutch Peace of 1674 had left Louis almost single-handed against his enemies ; but one Power, if ably led, has many advantages over even an extensive Coalition. Unity of purpose gives to campaigns that cohesion which makes for success, while undivided counsels result in that rapidity of movement without which the most consummate strategy may fail. To be first in the field is very often to remain last on the field, and it was by being ever beforehand with his enemies that Louis gained the proud position which he occupied in 1678. The French King might, with equal truth, be given his ancestor's title of 'Le Bien Servi,' for the cunning of his diplomatists was only equalled by the skill of his generals. Franche-Comté yielded in less than two months to the genius of Vauban ; the superior forces of William could not drive from the bloody field of Seneff the redoubtable Condé ; while one of the greatest feats of modern warfare sent the last German soldier flying across the Rhine from the field of Colmar and Turenne. But the glorious campaigns of 1674 were followed by a time of darkness for France. She lost Turenne and victory at Sasbach ; Condé retired ; and disasters at Konzen and Trèves followed the crushing defeat by sea and land of her one ally, Sweden ; while, at home, Colbert's treasure was exhausted, and the overtaxed peasantry was rising from discontent into open revolt. It was now that Louis became anxious to separate his

enemies, and to ensure the neutrality of England. It was now that the long-talked-of Peace Congress became less shadowy, and that Temple saw opening before him a new and more difficult diplomatic task amid the warring interests at Nimeguen. His part in the negotiations, however, was not really a very important one. Charles was too cunning to allow the certain feelings of discontent to focus on England's representative, and he refused to allow Temple to act as more than a nominal mediator. The author of the Triple Alliance did nothing to diminish his reputation, but he could do little to increase it. He did his best to oil the wheels of diplomacy by framing rules for the pacific intercourse of the nation's representatives, and he gave additional proofs of one of the weaker points in his character by the jealousy he showed of Du Cros;¹ but his heart was not in his work, and his hand had little strength behind it. For at Nimeguen the sword was mightier than the tongue. Temple called the meeting of the Congress the 'Dawn of Peace,'² but 'Victoria pax non pactione parienda est,' and its success evidently waited on the fortunes of the field. The dawn bade fair to be long in breaking when each party claimed to keep all that he had gained and to recover all that he had lost, and when France alone was in the position of the successful gambler who is willing to get up from the table with his hands full. Spain, as usual, was proudly blind to her own impotence; Brandenburg wished to continue the struggle till the last Swede was driven from the mainland; and the only hope for

¹ A diplomatic busybody, nominally representing Swedish interests in London, really in the pay of Barillon. Temple's slighting remarks concerning Du Cros (T. W., i. 465) elicited a 'Letter . . . in answer to the impertinencies of Sir W. Temple' (1693).

² T. W., i. 418.

peace lay in the attitude of the Dutch. It was the irony of Fate which placed the most resolute opponent of France at the head of a nation which was ready to sacrifice everything for her own commercial security; and Temple was at one with William in resisting the idea of a separate treaty between France and the States, for he realized that Louis only wished for a neutralized Holland as a signal for an attack 'with more advantage and surprise'¹ on a weakened Coalition.

But the wavering counsels of Charles, the opportunism of Louis, and a divided Holland, all fought against Prince and diplomat. There were hopes of better things when the firm resolution of the newly married William began to influence the vacillating Stuart; but the refusal by Louis of the conditions of peace inspired by the younger man led to a treaty being signed, between England and the Republic alone, which the author of the Triple Alliance, who had hoped that Charles would have forced the French hand by active intervention in the war, judged to be 'but an ill copy of the great original.'² And Louis was now less than ever inclined to yield to William's terms, for he had been encouraged by the exploits of his navy and Duquesne to copy the example of De Ruyter at Chatham, and by the sudden capture of Ghent and Ypres was now in a position to extort peace from a thoroughly alarmed States-General. Temple hurried off to the Hague, where he was told that his coming was 'esteemed like that of the swallow, which brought fair weather always with it';³ but it was Holland's hope for the sunshine of unrestricted and secure prosperity on her own commerce which was voiced in this welcome, and

¹ T. W., i. 455.

² *Ibid.*, p. 456.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 464, 'the handsomest Dutch compliment I had met with.'

with peace in sight on Louis' proffered terms of a 'barrier'¹ in the Spanish Netherlands, a deaf ear was turned to the expostulations of Prince, nobles, and Ambassador, who would put loyalty to allies before self-interest, and who hoped either to continue the war, or to recover the conditions which had been wrested from their hands by the merchant faction at Amsterdam. What Temple calls the 'fatal day' of August 11, 1678, saw the Dutch nation emerge from the six years' struggle without the loss of an acre of land, and with her trading interests secured and even extended; but it also saw France in the happy position of being able to exercise imperiously the 'Droict de Bienfeance' against the deserted Coalition.² The disappointed Ambassador aptly summed up the situation when he said that 'France, having made peace with Holland, treated all the rest with ease and leisure, as playing a sure game';³ and though Temple found a crumb of comfort in being saved by some difficulty of etiquette from the disgrace of affixing his name to the treaty, William's wrath at his country's betrayal of her allies could only find relief in a last angry effort before the walls of Mons.

'Thus ended in smoke the negotiation which was near raising so great a fire,'⁴ says Temple; and he gives unwilling but unstinted praise to the Frenchmen whose kill had quenched the conflagration which at one time threatened to destroy their country. 'The French fools are dead,'⁵ he quotes, and the Peace of Nimeguen indeed marked a triumph for French generalship and French diplomacy. It left Louis the only gainer after a struggle

¹ The 'barrier' extended from the sea to the Meuse, and was guarded by Nieuport, Courtrai, Oudenarde, Ath, Charleroi, etc.

² T. W., i. 479.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 470.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 470.

⁵ Italian proverb, 'Gli pazzi Francesi sono morti.'

against the massed forces of the greater part of Europe, and it placed him for the time being on a very pinnacle of glory. To his courtiers he appeared, in the words of Pellisson, 'a visible miracle.' To his people he was as a god, and his apotheosis appears in the inscription on his statue in the Place des Victoires—' *Homini Immortali.*' Yet the peace of 1678 was really only an armistice. The very fact that the gain was all on the side of France left sore feelings in the hearts of her adversaries, and the fact of that gain being discounted by the failure of the immediate object of the war made it certain that Louis himself would speedily renew the struggle.

When Temple sailed for England with feelings of anger at the result of his last diplomatic mission, he left behind him a friend and Prince whose unquenchable hatred of France was within ten years to spur a mightier coalition against the terror of Europe. He returned to the discomfited pensioner of a monarch whose treacherous seizure of Strasburg within three years was to mark a new start along the path which he had marked out for himself; the path which was to slope rapidly downwards from the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and to land him at length in the retributive humiliations of Blenheim and Ramillies.

IV

'Go we to council. Let Achilles sleep.'

Troilus and Cressida.

AT the Peace of Nimeguen, Temple ended a career as foreign Ambassador in which he had consistently opposed France. He returned from Holland in February, 1679, and found England still tracing her disturbances to the same country.

The chicanery of Charles had met with failure, and his position in the eyes of Europe and of his own people had been weakened ; but England's neutrality was still no inconsiderable factor in the politics of a continent where the designs of Louis were but lying temporarily dormant. The aim of the French King was still to foment discord between Charles and his Parliament, still to keep England so occupied that the decisions of the 'Chambres de Réunion' might be freely enforced on Europe.

We see, therefore, that active foreign interference in English politics which had been introduced during the recent war extended and amplified by Barillon ; we see a union between the Whigs and France which gained for Louis the title of the 'Leader of the Opposition' ; we see that Opposition successful in disbanding the army, and in overthrowing Danby ; and we see the final triumph of the French policy when Charles was forced to dissolve Parliament for the last time, and to become humbly dependent on Louis.

To France, again, we look for the causes of the religious

convulsions which met Temple on his arrival in England, convulsions of which he who had known the turmoil of the Civil War said: 'I never saw greater disturbances in men's minds.'¹ The Revolution which was advancing towards its climax in 1688 was but a part of the great European movement which was darkening the prospects of Protestantism; and the attacks of Louis on the Huguenots, which were to culminate in the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, went far towards accentuating the alarm aroused in the minds of Englishmen by the glimpses they had obtained of Charles' French designs. To the Continent was traced the origin of the 'damnable and hellish plot,'² in which 'some truth there was, but dashed and brewed with lies';³ in the Jesuit colleges at Valladolid and St. Omer was hatched the conspiracy which was to give violent expression to the Catholic anger at England's understanding with Protestant Holland; while in Coleman's correspondence with France was seen one of the few tangible pieces of evidence in a plot which was built up mainly by the monstrous fictions of Oates, and of that infamous band of 'informers' whose rank growth had flourished on the persecuting measures of the reign.

Foreign influences, again, supplied the chief ground for the action of, and the main chance of success to, that party of 'Whig'⁴ politicians who were to seize the opportunity of a public panic to push themselves into power by the impeachment of a Minister who had intrigued with France, and by the attempted exclusion of an heir to the throne who had embraced the religion of the French King.

¹ T. W., i. 332.

² Resolution of the House of Commons, October, 1678.

³ Dryden, 'Absalom and Achitophel.'

⁴ The name came later; the thing was already in existence.

There is no evidence to show that any leading politician had a hand in the inception of a plot which swayed all England with passion and terror, but all used it to further their own ends, and no one more zealously and unscrupulously than the President of the 'Green Ribbon Club,' who, by skilfully fanning the flame of popular frenzy, became the head of a great party uniting peers and people in resistance to royal supremacy and Anglican intolerance; and who was then in a position at last to take some revenge for the years of impotence, ill-usage, and even imprisonment, which had fallen to his lot as the leader of a small and baffled faction.

The character of Ashley Cooper, first Earl of Shaftesbury, has been painted in many shades, varying from the deep black of Macaulay's tremendous philippic to the kindly white of his apologist, Mr. Christie; but the true Whig leader seems to lie somewhere between these two extremes. It is a mistaken view which would make him appear as a high-minded patriot: it is unjust to concentrate the indignation of a more sensitive age on a statesman whose faults were mostly the faults of his times, but whose ability laid him more open than his colleagues to the fierce light of contemporary and later criticism. It is useless trying to acquit him of political profligacy: it is not right to print his name too darkly on a sullied page because his 'nimble wit outran the heavy pack,'¹ because he surpassed his fellow profligates in the power of gauging accurately the trend of events. It is vain attempting to whitewash a statesman whose 'wild ambition to slide on Fortune's ice'² led him finally into deeper and fouler waters, and whose absorbing desire always to ride on the crest of the political wave

¹ Dryden, 'The Medal,' line 45.

² Dryden, 'Absalom and Achitophel,' line 200.

forced him into a position whence he was carried on the tide of popular idolatry into more and more violent courses, which not only led to the shedding of much innocent blood, but which undermined at once his health and his intelligence, and caused his career to end in failure and disgrace: it is unfair to refuse him any 'escape upwards,'¹ to prefer false charges against him which even the vitriolic pen of Dryden leaves unwritten, to deny him the credit for his championship of toleration and political liberty, and to be silent on the brighter aspects of his character, on his purity in money matters in what—to repeat Ovid's sarcasm—might truly be called a 'golden age,' and his purity in private life in times when 'debauchery was loyalty and gravity rebellion.'

But it is the principal actor who too often has to bear the chief blame for a dramatic failure, and there could be little doubt that Shaftesbury was the most important figure on the political stage when Temple arrived in England. It had been inevitable that, once given an opportunity and a popular war-cry, the burning ambition and dominant personality of the first great demagogue would attract many followers and bring him to the front. The opportunity had come. The last days of 1678 had seen the Whigs swept into popular favour on a wave of excitement and terror. The last session of the Cavalier Parliament had seen the leader of a minority become the virtual leader of the House, and had seen the weapon which chance had put into his hands used with fierce energy to destroy Danby and to get rid of James and the Catholic succession. The first days of 1679 had seen the King's hands at last forced by his opponents, the eighteen-year-old Parliament at last dissolved in a desperate effort to save the impeached Minister, and the

¹ Macaulay, *Essay on 'Sir William Temple.'*

appeal to the country for which Shaftesbury and his followers had so long intrigued at last made a certainty. And it was in no half-hearted fashion that the country answered that appeal. In the first General Election, which was fought almost entirely on those party lines which form the key to our present Parliamentary system, the Whigs swept the board. Cavalier and Tory sentiment sank into temporary obscurity before the all-pervading terror of the Papists, and the Court party almost disappeared before the organization and discipline of the Green Ribbon Club. Well might a man of Temple's Royalist sentiments and placid temperament try to avoid taking part in such a political crisis. Well might the sensitive diplomat shrink from 'the most surprising scene that ever was,' a scene which was 'unfit for such actors as I know myself to be, my character abroad still continuing.'¹ On his arrival in England during the General Election, Temple had been once more requested by the King to undertake the post of Secretary; but he had lost the support of his chief friend in the late Lord Treasurer; he knew that the Whigs included the quondam Ambassador in their bitter hostility; his honesty recoiled from the attitude of a King whose sense of honour and justice had yielded to expediency in a plot which he knew to be false; and his vanity was unable to blind him to the uncomfortable certainty that what Charles wanted was the prestige and good fame of the author of the Triple Alliance rather than the advice and help of a new Secretary. Temple therefore refused to barter away or imperil his good name, and though he was unwilling to risk censure by openly refusing the proffered post, he adroitly 'ordered his pretensions'² in the elections, so that he should fail to be returned, and

consequently have an excuse for refusing an office which ought to be held by a member of the House of Commons. But the new Parliament met, and surpassed all expectations in the violence of its proceedings. It nullified Charles' desperate efforts to rescue his Minister—for a dissolution was not allowed to save Danby any more than in after-years it was allowed to save Warren Hastings—and, in face of the King's pardon, the late Lord Treasurer was sent to the Tower; while angry votes against the 'horrible and treasonable Popish plot' culminated in what were now open attempts to alter the succession to the Crown.

Temple appears to have been touched by the 'miserable condition of the King's affairs,'¹ and Charles, by dint of adroit flattery, and by skilfully working on his compassion for a Sovereign in difficulties, and on his pride at being apparently offered Danby's post as confidential Minister, at length persuaded the reluctant diplomat to lend the prestige of his name to a discredited Administration.

Temple was now on the threshold of what he called the 'cockpit'² of home politics. He was at last and unwillingly entangled in the heated factions of a Parliament where the temporary agreement of the old 'Country Party' with the Whigs against Danby had been changed into bitter hostility on the subject of the succession to the Crown. On the one side was the party led by Halifax, who proposed to 'limit' the power of James, and to turn England into a virtual republic by handing over to Parliament the executive functions of the Crown; on the other were the adherents of the Shaftesbury-Sacheverell scheme of excluding altogether any but a Pro-

¹ T. W., i. 333.

² Temple to the Lord Treasurer, February 28, 1679.

testant King, who could be trusted to exercise the functions of royalty in a constitutional spirit. In either plan there was great peril. In the former lay the future danger of James proving a non-compliant Catholic ; in the latter the present danger that in Monmouth a choice would be made of an unworthy Protestant.

From a Parliament inflamed by such questions Charles could expect little. All he could do was to gain time till divisions among his enemies and restored unity among his friends should cause a reaction in his favour. A Fabian game was his obvious policy, and he played it with consummate skill. Amid the turmoil of a frenzied Opposition his natural coolness, his imperturbable good-nature, and his seeming cheerful indifference to all troubles, helped him to tide over the time of stress which lay between him and his revenge.

His first move in the subtle policy which underlay his apparent inaction was a scheme of which the suggestion has been generally attributed to Temple. The late Ambassador tells us how he was dismayed at the growing influence of the 'Exclusionists,' and how he resolved if possible to break the power of the men who threatened injury to the prospects of the Prince of Orange by playing on the King's affection for the Duke of Monmouth. But he saw no one capable of successfully confronting the Whigs, and he realized that the Crown had, for the present, too little authority safely to dissolve a Parliament whose violence was getting beyond bounds, or safely to rule without one 'till the present humours might cool.'¹ He therefore proposed, he tells us, to form a new Privy Council of thirty members, of which half were to be the chief officers of State, and half of those independent members who had 'most credit and sway in both

¹ T. W., i. 333.

Houses,'¹ and who would be able to give popular weight to the Government without being sufficiently numerous to divert it from its course. An important point in the scheme was that it sought to put into practice the widely prevalent theory that authority should be dependent on the amount of landed property: The new Council was, therefore, to be composed of men whose revenues should act as a counterpoise to the wealth of the House of Commons, and who would even be able, at a pinch, to relieve the necessities of the Crown out of their own purses. The new body was to supersede both the existing Privy Council of fifty members and the small interior Council which, under Charles' rule, had been allowed to concentrate in its hands the powers of the larger body. There was to be no 'Cabal,' much less a second Clarendon or Danby ; but the King was to pledge himself to rule by the advice of the new 'Constitution,' as Temple calls it, and to undertake no important step without its concurrence.

Such, in outline, is the scheme which was to give to the leaders of the Opposition a share in the Administration which might lessen their attacks on the Crown and the Crown's Prerogative. An examination of its inception and working brings before us three problems : Who was its author ? what was its real nature and scope ? why did it fail ?

To the first question the traditional answer, and the answer of the new Minister, is—Sir William Temple. 'These considerations cast *me* upon the thoughts of a new Council. . . . This whole matter was consulted and deduced upon paper only between the King and *me*. . . . The King resolved that *I* should go, and communicated the whole scheme to Finch, Sunderland, and

¹ T. W., i. 333.

Essex.'¹ Temple's whole life would give the lie to a suggestion that he wilfully perverted the truth in these statements, but his own writings give a possibility of truth to the idea that, in claiming the whole credit for the new scheme, he may have been deceived by his own vanity, and by the subtle policy of a crafty King. Many readers of Temple's Memoirs will come to the conclusion that the writer was not without a touch of megalomania and egotism, and was rather inclined to make most of his geese swans, and most of his diplomatic feats epoch-making. They will discern the pride which is but thinly disguised by his mock-modest disclaimers of merit, and the vanity which blinds him to the fact that, in the diplomatic game, the moving force is after all the King or Minister who pulls the wires, rather than the Ambassador-puppet, dance he never so gracefully. Out of this conceit Charles would have been quick to realize the possibility of making capital, just as he had been quick to make capital out of the self-importance of Buckingham in the 'Traité Simulé.'

Again, Temple was a picturesque figure with which to secure popular approval, but he was rather a speculative student than a practical politician, and was too conscientious to be allowed altogether behind the scenes. The advice of a more adroit and unscrupulous Minister was required; and the man who filled this want, who appears alone to have really shared in the secrets of Charles' policy, and who ought to share in the credit or blame for the new Council, was Sunderland.

This statesman had been appointed as Secretary of State early in February, 1679. In character he was the very opposite of Temple, and was therefore much more suitable as a partner in the King's designs. He was a

¹ T. W., i. 333-334.

‘Proteus ever acting in disguise, a finished statesman, intricately wise’;¹ he was brilliant, unscrupulous, and dissolute, and as inveterate a gambler in politics as at the tables. He was related to Shaftesbury, in close touch with the Opposition, and quite ready to betray their secrets, or historians have done him an injustice. Also, the new plan seems to postulate some degree of previous understanding with that Opposition—the Whig leader might well have quoted ‘Timeo Danaos’ if he had suddenly been proffered an unexplained gift by Charles—and Sunderland was as obviously a suitable go-between as Temple was an unsuitable one. True, the former professed equal amazement and pleasure at the official communication of the new scheme,² but what would be an easier form of duplicity to a ‘Proteus’? That shrewd observer Algernon Sidney, in writing to his friend Savile, said: ‘The King certainly inclines not to be so stiff as formerly in advancing only those that exalt prerogative’; and stated as his own opinion on the new Council, and as the opinion generally held in Parliament, that ‘Sunderland is the author of all this.’³

It indeed seems clear that, behind the simple-minded, honest littérateur, there was a more practical and facile statesman assisting Charles to fit Temple’s doctrinaire scheme to the needs of the moment. It was Sunderland who took the initiative in opening negotiations with Essex, an avowed recruit of the Country Party.⁴ It was Sunderland who agreed with suspicious alacrity to Charles’ attitude on the question of the personnel of the new Council, when the admission of Halifax was long

¹ Dryden, ‘Faction Displayed,’ *State Poems*, 1716, iv. 90.

² T. W., i. 334.

³ *Savile Correspondence*, p. 16, April 21, 1679.

⁴ *Foxcroft*, ‘Halifax,’ i. 145.

'kicked at,' but Shaftesbury, the head and front of all offences against the Crown, was, in face of Temple's protests, not only included, but even made President.¹ It was Sunderland who proposed to Temple a confidential alliance for the harmonious working of the new scheme, with a readiness to violate one of its fundamental principles that seems to argue some secret understanding with Charles, and with an assurance which seems to show that he considered himself as at least equally responsible for its success.² It was Sunderland who suggested the inclusion of his latest recruit—Essex;³ who strenuously, though it must be confessed unsuccessfully, opposed Temple's proposed addition of the chief 'Limitationist'—Halifax;⁴ who finally suggested, and insisted on, the admission of the High-Priests of Exclusion—Shaftesbury and Monmouth.⁵

After-events also proved that Temple had not really been admitted into the King's confidence. The new Council was officially promulgated on April 21, and on May 27 Parliament was prorogued, with the advice of Sunderland, but *without* Temple being consulted.⁶ On October 15 a prorogation for a year was suddenly announced in the Council, with Sunderland's approval, but to the astonishment and disgust of Temple.⁷

Finally, Temple himself, in his *Memoirs*, recedes at least twice from the position as sole author of the scheme in which he took such pride. He speaks of the authors of the new Constitution incurring the enmity of Shaftes-

¹ T. W., i. 334.

² *Ibid.*, p. 336 (*cp.* Sunderland's proposals for the construction of a homogeneous Cabinet Council to James II. in 1688, and to William III. in 1694).

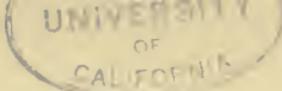
³ *Ibid.*, p. 336.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 337.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 346. Foxcroft, 'Halifax,' i. 196.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 338.



bury by gaining an unduly large share of credit with the King ; and though the plural may be merely a clerical error, the idea that it was more probably a slip of the pen, caused by a temporarily unguarded vanity, is strengthened by the fact that on another page we find Temple complaining that all the blame for the failure of the new Council was being laid on his shoulders, and rather characteristically trying to shift the responsibility on to Sunderland and Essex, without whose help ' to finish the draft of it, the thing had certainly died.'¹

Although some of these facts may have been mere coincidences, we cannot help coming to the conclusion that, in the aggregate, they point to the authorship of the new scheme as being twofold ; we cannot help thinking that they point to doctrinaire Temple as the author of an attempted permanent constitutional change, but to practical Sunderland as responsible for a temporary change of Ministers for political reasons.

In discussing the nature of the new Privy Council, it is therefore necessary to differentiate between the two views it represents. As a constitutional change, it has been criticised at length by Macaulay, who comes to the conclusion that its intended scope must be looked for in one of only two possible directions—Cabinet Government ; or, in the words of Barillon, ' des États, non des Conseils.' The former he rightly rejects, but for what seem to us mistaken reasons. He dismisses the idea that Temple could have designed the Council on the lines of a Cabinet, because it was too big, and had no chance of securing the necessary qualities of unity, secrecy, and expedition. But in this criticism Macaulay appears to have been looking at the eighteenth-century scheme with nineteenth-century eyes. He seems to have judged the

¹ T. W., i. 345.

action of Temple by a standard of political knowledge which was far out of the reach of politicians in the reign of Charles II. England has more or less consistently followed the Platonic maxim that infinite time is the best maker of States, and in 1679 she was still engaged in broadening her interpretation of the nation's traditional polity to crush the Crown's traditional Prerogative. The framework of our Constitution was still un-fixed, and there were but the faintest outlines of the central figure in its future elaboration. The King was still expected to govern in person, with the help of his Ministers in their respective provinces, and with the advice of his Privy Council in questions of general policy. So far from the Councillors being expected to agree with one another in political views, they were still considered as being, and in practice actually were, an advisory rather than a governing body, and divergence of opinions would be thought to help rather than hinder the King, by presenting him with a greater choice of suggested reforms. Temple, then, could not, and did not, aim at Cabinet government. On the contrary, his scheme, so far from foreshadowing our modern convention, was an attempt to check its growth ; for it aimed at preventing the concentration of power into the hands of small committees, and in this respect may be classed with the Privy Council clause in the Act of Settlement.

Macaulay's alternative to Cabinet government seems to us equally untenable. The primary reason for the production of a new constitutional scheme was a desire to check the growing disorders of Parliament, of a body of men arrogant with newly acquired political strength, and led by political incendiaries who sought to burn out a path to power even over the sacred rights of hereditary succession. How could Temple have hoped for the

acquiescence of such a Parliament in what was practically its own extinction ? Above all, how could he have hoped for the success of a potential oligarchy which left out of its consideration the most strenuous and dangerous leader in the country ? We cannot help thinking that Macaulay took Temple's remarks too much *au pied de la lettre*, and that he was somewhat deluded by the grandiloquence of a vain statesman who overloaded his scheme with the high-sounding and ominous title, 'This New Constitution.' We think that the design of the new Privy Council was much more simple and less subtle than Macaulay and others would make it appear.

Unfortunately, we have no record of Temple's conferences with the King to tell us how far the published scheme was a compromise between theory and expediency ; but, judging of it as given to Parliament,¹ it would appear to have been merely an attempt to restore to something like its former importance, but on a more popular and representative basis, the old Privy Council. This body had fallen from the position it had held under the Tudors ; it had become unwieldy in size owing to Crown nominations, and its power had been sapped by interior committees and by single omnipotent Ministers. The impeachments of Clarendon and Danby and the unpopularity of the Cabal had made it necessary to discover some means for bringing Ministers into closer correspondence, and, if possible, on better terms with Parliament. The pressing question was how to harmonize the relations of the Executive with a Legislature which was absorbing more and more control in the State. Temple's scheme, therefore, was an attempt to interfere between King and Parliament ; an attempted compromise between the former's hereditary right to appoint

¹ Appendix to Memoirs (T. W., i. 361).

Ministers and the latter's right to control them. It was to provide a kind of half-way house between the two powers —a house in which the advisory powers of the old Privy Council should join hands with the executive powers of the Crown ; in which the advice proffered by the new Councillors should have the additional weight of concentration and formality, and the advice asked by the King should be regularly obtainable from statesmen of all persuasions, whose wealth removed them from the more pressing dangers of corruption, and whose patriotism would not be sapped by jealousies of a single Minister or small clique of Ministers. Unlike the old Privy Council, it was to be moderate and constant in size, moderate and constant in power. Unlike the modern Cabinet or the modern Privy Council, it was to be neither wholly official nor partly ornamental ; it was to give the King fixed ministers,¹ but not a fixed Ministry ; compulsory advisers, but not compulsory advice.

The scheme, viewed from Sunderland's point of view, may be described more shortly and with more certainty. Charles was engaged in marking time. He had to face a hostile Parliament, but there were signs of a coming reaction. The frenzy of the Popish plot was dying down, and while the friends of the Court were beginning to unite, its enemies were quarrelling and becoming divided. The King might have paraphrased Queen Elizabeth's remark as 'Time and I against the Parliament,' and he was willing to accept any scheme which would temporarily subdue the dangerous voices of the Whig leaders. Sunderland was therefore encouraged to mould Temple's scheme into a form in which it might prove an effective

¹ Fixed ministers in the sense of formal advisory servants of the Crown, not in the sense of Ministers holding official administrative posts.

sop with which to quiet the cries for exclusion. As a temporary scheme, it was therefore directed along the line of least resistance, and was framed to draw within its quieting effect the chief representatives of all parties —Tories, Limitationists, and Whig-Exclusionists. Doctrinaire Temple may have aimed at a new and permanent constitutional reform; but Sunderland, the opportunist, merely wanted a new but temporary body of Ministers to act as a stopgap.¹

Both men failed to attain their objects. The reasons for failure will appear too clearly in the history of the new Council, but it may be briefly stated here that, theoretically, it was bound to fail, because it was based on the fundamental error of implied antagonism between the Executive and the Legislature; and because a body of thirty, representative of every interest and most political opinions, was not likely to be an efficient administrative body, whatever might be its merits as a debating society.² Practically, it was doomed to failure, because Charles refused from the first to have his hands tied by his new set of advisers;³ because the sop failed to quieten; because the Parliamentary jealousies and quarrels, instead of being lessened, were only increased and accentuated in the narrower body; because Exclusionist and Limitationist were still further from one another in a disunited Council than they had been in a factious Parliament.

¹ 'Sperando che sodisfatta la loro ambizione di governare e con ammetterli al maneggio degli affari si plachino.'—SAROTTI.

² Anson, ii. 97.

³ 'God's fish,' Charles said to his friend Bruce, 'they have put a set of men about me, but they shall know nothing, and this keep to yourself' (Airy, p. 239).

V

‘Une bonne intention est une échelle trop courte.’

IT would seem as if any great public scheme to which Temple put his hand was as bound to end in failure as it was bound to be greeted at first with popular approval. When the new Privy Council began its official existence, on April 21, 1679, it was welcomed with general applause and rejoicings in England and Ireland, while in Holland an immediate rise in the funds showed that the Dutch had not lost their trust in the author of the Triple Alliance. The House of Commons, on the other hand, received with coldness what the more knowing members shrewdly, and not altogether incorrectly, suspected of being ‘a new Court juggle;’¹ while Temple himself, naturally sanguine as he was, had become so hopeless of success since the inclusion of Shaftesbury that he seriously thought of rendering himself incapable of taking office by omitting to pass the Sacramental ‘Test’ within the time appointed by law—a rather dishonourable intention from which he was only dissuaded by the entreaties of his wife and sister.²

Temple’s forebodings were soon realized, but he himself was partly responsible for the first retrograde step. Within a week after the public institution of the new Council the old conditions were revived, and a small ‘foreign committee’ to consult upon the chief affairs

¹ T. W., i. 335.

² *Ibid.*

'that were then on the anvil' was formed by Sunderland, Halifax, Essex, and Temple.¹ The suggestion came from the first-named, and though Temple made a feeble protest against this violation of the fundamental principle of the new scheme, he yielded with an ease which gives rather a shock to our opinion of his consistency, and almost a flavour of truth to the alternative contained in his remark that 'we four were either the four honestest men in England or the greatest knaves.' Whether honest men or knaves, they at first agreed together perfectly. Signs of falling out, however, came with Sunderland's proposal to admit Shaftesbury and Monmouth, the leading Exclusionists, and the very men with whom loyal Temple had steadily refused to treat. But the enlarged committee soon divided into hostile camps. A split was indeed inevitable, for there was no chance of unanimity on the burning question of the day. The new Council had signally failed to quieten the voices of the Exclusionists. A week after its institution Russell, one of Shaftesbury's confidants, brought before the House of Lords a resolution passed by the Commons which clearly foreshadowed the coming Exclusion Bill.²

¹ T. W., i. 336. It has been suggested that historians have followed Temple's own account of this committee, and have been misled into taking it as a sort of Cabinet or Cabal; forgetting that it was a mere private conclave, not selected by the King, and probably paralleled by a similar Exclusionist conciliabulum. That the 'committee' was informally instituted seems true; but, if we are to believe Temple—and his veracity about bare facts has not been called in question—it is certain that the 'Triumvirate' soon monopolized the King's confidence, and had as much administrative *locus standi* as any previous Crown-appointed Cabal: it is also certain that Shaftesbury realized its importance when he sought and obtained temporary admission in it for himself and Monmouth.

² Foxcroft, 'Halifax,' i. 151.

Halifax objected furiously,¹ and round this statesman was now crystallized the opposition to the Whig policy. The reasons for the strong opposition of the 'Trimmer' to Exclusion are not altogether obvious, but his character to some extent helps us to a clue. Halifax was a statesman at once temperate, cultured, and versatile; with a courtly suavity of manner, enlivened by a keen sense of humour; with rare powers of eloquence enhancing rare powers of reasoning; but with a speculative and philosophical mind which made him 'trim' between the parties of liberty and dominion, which made him a mediator among the ambitious, a moderate among the factious, and a placable enemy, though an uncertain friend. He was a man who would theoretically advocate an oligarchic commonwealth, and practically resent as an aristocrat the raising of a bastard to the throne; who would theoretically object to interference with individual rights, and practically wish to limit political powers which were pregnant with danger to the nation.

At the side of Halifax were now ranged honest and earnest Essex, whose 'conscientious scruples'² against Exclusion had not yet been overcome by the Whigs; and Sunderland, the 'second Machiavel,'³ who was always ready to join the party which seemed the stronger. This Triumvirate was reinforced after his own wary fashion by Temple, and became as powerful in the Privy Council as Shaftesbury was in the House of Commons.

In May came a crisis. The violence of the Whigs, which had been quietened for a time by the new measure, was now redoubled. Charles tried to calm the storm by offering to yield to the 'limiting' policy of

¹ Burnet, ii. 212.

² *Ibid.*, ii. 210.

³ Dryden, 'Faction Displayed' ('State Poems,' 1716, iv. 90).

Halifax, but his compromise was angrily rejected, and on May 22 a resolution was passed in favour of a Bill 'to disable the Duke of York to inherit the Imperial Crown of England.' Five days later the King's answer came in the sudden prorogation of Parliament—a blow to Shaftesbury's plans which wrung from that usually self-restrained statesman the savage remark that 'he would have the head of the man who had given such advice.'¹ It was quite obvious now that the Triumvirate alone had the ear of the King, and it was equally obvious that the new Council was doomed when so early in its life a supremely important question was settled without its concurrence or advice.

During the recess the disputes between the two parties went on in the Privy Council with ever-increasing acrimony, and the small touch of comedy which had lightened the last session—when one 'very fat lord'² was counted as ten, to enable Shaftesbury to gain at any rate one pure title to renown by passing the famous Habeas Corpus Act—found no parallel during a period of general ill-humour and gloom. Even the Triumvirate and Temple had differences, for the latter—honest man—was firm in refusing to countenance the persecution of the Papists for a plot which he knew to be false, and equally firm in refusing to put his feet more deeply into the mud by accepting the post of Secretary.³

The political atmosphere became still more heavily charged when Monmouth returned to London in June, with his pretensions to the throne in place of James intensified by a successful campaign in Scotland against

¹ T. W., i. 338.

² Burnet, ii. 264. Probably a fiction, but the depressed reader of 1679 history cannot afford to lose it.

³ T. W., i. 339.

the victims of Lauderdale. It now became a serious question with the King's advisers as to whether it would be safe to allow Shaftesbury's hot indignation an opportunity of flaming out in the present Parliament. The prorogation was due to expire in October, but Charles and the Triumvirate agreed that a new House of Commons could not be more, and might be less, refractory. They therefore determined on an immediate dissolution. On July 3 this decision was announced to the Privy Council,¹ and was followed by an outburst of indignant remonstrances, led by the Lord Chancellor, and followed up by Shaftesbury 'in the most tragical terms.'² The King, however, was unmoved by the opinions of a Council which had no power to enforce the spirit of the new compromise, and it was too late for Temple to change once more from the side of expediency to that of consistency. He made a short and hesitating speech in favour of the King's Prerogative, and thus helped to give the deathblow to a measure from which he had hoped so much, and which he had done so little to sustain. The dissolution of Parliament only postponed the danger of the Exclusion Bill, but it permanently destroyed all the hopes raised by the new Privy Council, and sent it to join the long line of constitutional expedients which had been abandoned before they had been fairly tried.

The new Parliament was summoned for the following October, and at the ensuing elections Temple was chosen for the University of Cambridge, the only serious objection to his candidature coming from the Bishop of Ely, who had persuaded himself that the religious toleration described in Temple's 'Observations on the Netherlands' represented the personal opinions of the writer.

Meanwhile the 'common cares' of administration

¹ Henry Sidney, i. 21.

² T. W., i. 341.

were in the hands of the Triumvirate. Temple had early begun to neglect all but the official meetings of the Privy Council. Gardening had greater attractions for him than politics, his adhesion to his friends' policy was more wary than whole-hearted, and it was obvious that he was no longer in their entire confidence. His ornamental part in the political game had been played, and in the complexities and hazards of the present troubled situation his unambitious caution and halting resolution made him more of an encumbrance than a help.

As the summer declined the Triumvirate found themselves faced by a threatened crisis. The King suddenly became dangerously ill. His death was hourly expected. Wild rumours spread about that the Whigs were preparing to keep James out of the throne by the use of the royal forces which Monmouth now controlled. The Tories had no unity, no leader, no cause, and with feverish anxiety expected the worst. The Triumvirate met in hurried and secret conclave. James, who had been exiled to Brussels in the vain hope that his absence might allay the fear and hatred of his enemies, was hastily summoned to England, with careful instructions to make his return appear spontaneous. He arrived at Windsor on August 28, but by that time the King was much better, and though the secret was well kept, and Charles played up to his advisers by greeting his brother with well-feigned surprise, the Triumvirate were alarmed and ashamed at their precipitance.

Temple had been roused from his retirement at Sheen by the ominous reports about the King, but he was easily persuaded by his nominal colleagues that the danger was exaggerated, and contentedly returned to his orchards. It was only by chance that he became aware of the Duke's arrival in London, and he at once hurried to see

the Triumvirate, expecting them to be equally surprised and discomfited with himself. They made no attempts to undeceive him. Essex pretended to be equally astonished and alarmed, but could not disguise a sneering smile. Sunderland, as might have been expected, was quite equal to the occasion, and 'talked deep into nothing'; while Halifax, with a keen sense of the humour of the situation, lifted up his hands and eyes in mock dismay, and would like to know what it all meant.¹

Temple's misgivings were now aroused, and his vanity hurt by the behaviour of his friends; but he could get nothing out of Sunderland but hypocritical commiseration, nothing out of Halifax but humorous persiflage and a recommendation to go back to his melons. He was soon, however, to be given a stronger proof of the fact that he had lost the confidence, not only of his friends, but of the King.

Charles had made a rapid recovery, and the tension in the country had relaxed, but the short time of terrible anxiety, and the fear that the Whig plans carried with them the danger of civil war, had at last roused the sluggish Tories. The King saw signs of a coming reaction in his favour, and he was encouraged to take a bolder line of policy and a new set of advisers. There was little love lost between the Triumvirate and the Duke of York, and their summons to him had been but the counsel of despair. They had scored a decided success in persuading Charles to compromise matters by banishing both James and Monmouth, but the former had another shaft in his quiver, and his reappearance in England on October 13, followed two days later by the dismissal of Shaftesbury from the Privy Council, proved that, in the words of a contemporary, 'the Duke's party now

¹ T. W., i. 343.

governs.¹ Halifax retired to his country seat at Rufford; Essex resigned, to the 'horrible vexation,'² real or feigned, of Charles; but Sunderland, ready as ever, became at once as strong a pro-Yorkist as his fellow 'Chits,' Hyde and Godolphin.

The result of the new régime was seen in the first meeting of the Council which Temple had attended since his election. It was nearly time for the meeting of the new Parliament, in which there was to be a nucleus of a Court party, but still an overwhelming number of Whigs. Temple came to London, and had a friendly interview with the King and Sunderland, but no public business was discussed; and when Charles cast a bombshell into the midst of the Council by suddenly declaring his determination to prorogue the newly-elected Parliament, no one was more stunned by surprise than Temple. Several members rose, and would have argued against the King's decision; but Charles would hear no objections, and declared that his resolution was unalterable. Temple had acquiesced in the previous dissolution, but the voice of his conscience was now sharpened by wounded vanity, and with belated vigour he took up the cudgels on behalf of the ill-treated Council. He would not, he said, disobey the King by reasoning against the proposed dissolution, but he would earnestly advise His Majesty, if the present Council was unsuitable in personnel or numbers, to dissolve it and appoint another; for to make Councillors who were not permitted to counsel was contrary to precedent and contrary to sense. To this reproof Charles listened with his usual good nature, but Sunderland showed great resentment, and threatened to take the petty revenge of withholding the money due from the

¹ Savile Correspondence, November 15.

² Sidney, November 16.

Treasury to the late Ambassador. Temple, with equal heat, retorted that, if he had been treated with confidence, he would not have opposed the King—a not very creditable admission of pique.¹

Temple now resolved to retire altogether from politics. But the fact that Russell and three other principal Whigs pointed their disapproval of the King's high-handed action by personally handing in their resignations as Councillors, and that Essex and Halifax expressed their indignation in the same, though not in such an open, way, induced Temple to continue his attendance at Court. 'I resolved to go again to Council,' he says, 'to show that I had not herded with those that had left it, and that my leaving it too might not occasion some men's greater distaste at the Government';² but his action, coming as it did after his speech in Council and his remark to Sunderland, lays him open to the suspicion of having wished to turn the opportunity to account for reinstating himself in the royal favour and confidence. But Sunderland was now head of a new Triumvirate, and though his anger towards Temple had cooled, he gave him kindness but no confidence. The post of Secretary again fell vacant, but Temple was no longer pressed to take office, and it was obvious that he had now no share in the direction of public affairs.

Meanwhile, the fury of the Whigs was redoubled by the thought of the closed doors at Westminster. The air was thick with addresses and counter-addresses from 'Petitioners' and 'Abhorrers,' and the streets were filled with excited crowds, who groaned at the painted effigies of Papists, wept over the counterfeit presentment of Godfrey, and cheered the living idol who was so soon to see his ambitions quenched in the ditches of Sedge-

¹ T. W., i. 346.

² *Ibid.*, p. 347.

moor. The whole nation was convulsed with party spirit, and while the Tory party began to hold up its head under the stimulating stress of national conflict, the bold leadership of Shaftesbury attracted to his side many of the Moderates who had hitherto resisted being drawn into the vortex of the popular movement. The audacious public presentment of James to the Grand Jury in Westminster Hall as a Popish Recusant, and the simultaneous indictment of the King's Popish mistress, the Duchess of Portsmouth, as a 'common nuisance,' brought the latter in affright to the side of the Exclusionists. She was quickly followed by her ally Sunderland, who, as ever, was on the look-out for a place on the winning side; while Essex, always at heart a Whig, was at length persuaded to join the counsels of the Opposition. Godolphin followed suit, and even the King himself was said to have begun to waver under the influence of the renegade 'Madame Carwell.'¹ On the other hand, Halifax was drawn from his retirement to aid the weaker side, for his hatred of Shaftesbury and his policy was stronger than his detestation of James.

The attitude of Temple was characteristic. In public, and even in his Memoirs, he maintained a cautious neutrality; but there are indications in contemporary letters that his real opinion was that the passing of the Exclusion Bill was a foregone conclusion, and that a complete surrender to the Parliamentary majority was the only way in which to effect a reconciliation between the Court and the people, and the indispensable preliminary for a strong foreign policy.²

In October, 1680, the prorogation expired. The Whigs assembled with fierce anticipations of revenge, and

¹ Foxcroft, 'Halifax,' i. 235.

² *Ibid.*

Temple took his seat, for the first time, in his country's representative assembly. But any hopes or ambitions he may have had for Parliamentary distinction had long since been killed by the chilling air of a Court where he now met with nothing but indifference. In the congenial spheres of diplomacy and political speculation he had been of some account. He was now a nonentity, and distinction and praise were to him as the breath of his nostrils. He had been willing to enter a scene which was distasteful to his somewhat timid and ease-loving nature at the bidding of a King to whom he was genuinely loyal ; but, in the face of royal indifference, he had neither the ambition to carve out a course for himself nor the strength of will to unsheathe a solitary sword against odds. He indeed made some small attempts at diplomacy, and in at any rate one speech pleaded for moderation and a more conciliatory spirit ;¹ but during his one troubled session at Westminster he remained, on the whole, purely passive. Hyde asked him one day why he came so seldom to House or Council. Temple replied that he was following Solomon's advice 'neither to oppose the mighty, nor go about to stop the current of a river.'² Hyde probably had some feeling of contempt in his heart when he answered : ' You are a wise and a quiet man,' and, indeed, we cannot help a feeling of disappointment that the hero of the Triple Alliance should have been content to sit still in these stirring times without striking one blow for his side, and should have been unable to describe the climax of the Exclusion struggle because 'he was not at the House.'³ The all-

¹ 'I am tender of anything that may happen of ill-consequence to break the happy union betwixt the King and you' (Gray's 'Debates,' viii. 21).

² T. W., i. 352.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 351.

important measure passed triumphantly through the Commons, and was carried 'with a mighty shout' to the Upper Chamber; but Temple was at home 'playing a part very impertinent for a man that had any designs or ambitions about him.'¹ The consummate eloquence of Halifax in the House of Lords carried the waverers against the combined efforts of Shaftesbury, Essex, and Sunderland, and secured the rejection of the Whig Bill; but Temple 'had no stomach for such business.'² The exultant leader of the anti-Exclusionists was impeached 'on common fame'; the venerable Stafford and four other 'Popish Lords' were sacrificed in an endeavour to appease the wrath of the Commons, but with so little result that Charles had first to prorogue, and a few days later to dissolve, a Parliament whose violence was getting beyond bounds; but Temple 'intended to play no popular games.'³ Charles might well 'seem indifferent' when Temple asked if he wished him to stand for the new Parliament which was soon to meet at Oxford. The help of a man whose 'dare not' was as decided as his 'would' was hesitating, and whose patriotism was as ineffective as his honesty was inconvenient, was out of place in the counsels of a monarch who was soon to confront an infuriated and armed Parliament, and to beat it down with hands that were heavy with French gold. 'I doubt, considering how things stand at this time, that your coming into the House would not be able to do much good,'⁴ was Charles' good-natured remark; but he showed his contempt for his languid friend by striking his name out of the list of Privy Councillors. For this action Temple professed to be able to find no satisfactory explanation, for his vanity

¹ T. W., i. 351.

² *Ibid.*, p. 353.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 352.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 354.

forbade his acknowledging that he had been used merely as a tool, that his name had been his only asset, and that his lukewarm and cautious service had all along been estimated at its proper value.

But Temple had now his heart's desire, and was at liberty to spend the rest of his days with his books and fruit-gardens. 'We are, with all the cares and endeavours of our lives, to avoid diseases in the body, perturbations in the mind, luxury in diet, factions in the House, and seditions in the State.' This is the quotation with which Temple concludes his *Memoirs*,¹ and he set himself to follow the advice of the old Greek philosopher. Intent on quiet retirement, he exchanged Sheen for the deeper seclusion of Moor Park, and amidst the trim gardens of this new retreat he passed his days undisturbed except by dim rumours of the dark scenes which followed the dissolution of the Oxford Parliament ; of the panic of the Whigs and the triumph of the Tories ; of the desperate plots which only ended with the flight of Shaftesbury and the execution of Russell and Sidney ; of the gaols disgorging Catholics, only to be refilled with Dissenters ; and of Charles dying before he had time to enjoy more than a few years of a belated power, but not before he had time to make a belated declaration of his true faith.

Temple had promised the Duke of York that he would always be 'a legal man, and one that would always follow the Crown as became one';² and James, on his accession, made him some polite speeches, but respected his reserve. Monmouth's rustic army perished at Sedge-moor, and its leader afterwards died the pitiful death of a coward ; but to the recluse distance softened the terrible news and its more terrible sequel. The outcry of a

¹ T. W., i. 359.

² *Ibid.*, p. 343.

nation whose religion and liberties were trampled on by a Popish tyrant was re-echoed by the Huguenots across the water ; but Temple was strong in his resolution finally to abandon ‘ all those airy visions which have so long busied my head about mending the world.’¹

He would be loyal, but with a passive loyalty. He would not help William, but neither would he assist James. He would discuss with the mind of a speculative student the questions of ‘ original contract ’ and ‘ fundamental laws ’ which filled the air at the time of the Revolution ; but his conclusions would only come to light in the privacy of his own study. A short, bloodless struggle might set his old friend the Prince of Orange on the English throne ; but he would not be tempted into active life even under such happy auspices. He would pay the formal court of a loyal subject to a monarch who had become *de jure* as well as *de facto* King of England by the abdication of James and the consent of the nation ; he would offer the hospitality of a friend to a Prince to whom he was bound by old ties of intimacy ; but he would never again subject himself to the ‘ humours of a Court.’ He would allow his son to accept a high post under the new Administration ; but he would be tempted by no offer of the Chief Secretaryship to lay himself once more under the ‘ constraints of public business.’ ‘ I will be a good subject, but I have done with politics,’ was his last message to Charles ; and he kept his word. ‘ *Beatus ille qui procul negotiis.*’

¹ T. W., i. 359.

VI

‘And set a double varnish on thy fame.’—*Hamlet*.

THE influence of France had coloured the whole of Temple’s diplomatic career abroad ; it had lain like a shadow over Parliament during his brief political career at home ; it pursued him even when he retired to his study at Moor Park. The country of Louis XIV. had overshadowed Europe in war ; the country of Pascal, Racine, and Molière was almost equally dominant in literature.

In England, indeed, this new supremacy was less willingly and less fully admitted ; but in Europe generally French was fast becoming the universal language, the language of society, and the language of diplomacy. And as French advanced, Latin receded.

‘ For, though to smatter words of Greek
And Latin be the rhetorique
Of pedants counted and vainglorious,
To smatter French is meritorious.’

Thus wrote the author of ‘*Hudibras*,’ and his satire faithfully portrayed the tendencies of a world in which a revolution in mind was answering a revolution in manners.

The time of the Renaissance was ended ; the Classic Age had begun ; and, though there was still room for

the great, original genius, who should be stirred by his imagination and the impulse of new ideas to dream, to discover, and to create; yet the world had, in a measure, satisfied its curiosity, and cried aloud for commentators who should select, classify, and refine its new possessions. And with this demand for criticism rather than invention came a demand for a literary style which would suit the new needs.

The grip of Latin on the prose literature of England, as of Europe, had been slowly relaxing since the Reformation, and experiments in the vernacular demanded by national idiosyncrasy had advanced through the eccentricities of Euphuism and Sidneyism to the magnificent English of Milton, Taylor, and Browne; but the impassioned, metaphorical, and digressive style, which produced splendid results in the hands of great writers, was not suited to the powers of lesser men, or to the needs of an age which demanded light essays, travels, histories, and novels.

With the declining influence of the austere and masculine tongue of Rome, therefore, came the rising influence of the language the nature of which Guy de Maupassant says is '*d'être claire, logique et nerveuse*'; of the language whose exquisite polish suited a world with a desire for clear, convenient, and charming prose growing side by side with its desire for refinement in conversation, manners, and dress.

But '*Stylus virum arguit*,' our style betrays us, and the gain in lucidity and general utility was at first balanced by a loss in originality and power. The public makes a poor taskmaster for the man of letters, and a writer who produces new harmonies on the living keyboard of the English language to suit the ears of a more frivolous audience will be inclined to glide over essentials and to

accent trivialities. And the dying-down of the poetic impulse which answered the growth of the new prose had the same debasing effect, for 'eloquence is heard, poetry is overheard,' said Mill ; and with the decline of poetry will often come a decline in sincerity, when an author, instead of finding his true self in the freedom of a soliloquy, appeals to the weak by the rhetorical flourishes of a popular prose.

In a transition stage, too, the tentative handling of a new medium will make for superficiality. The prose of the last forty years of the seventeenth century was terse, sensible, and modern ; but it was somewhat pedestrian and unimaginative. It had neither the disordered beauties of the age that preceded it nor the limpid grace of that which followed it. The old style, with its interminable sentences and excessive imagery, had been discarded except by a few giant survivals ; but the new style produced results which were at first conventional, cold, and a little bare.

Temple, perhaps the finest professed prose writer of this transition stage, has left no book which is generally read or even known by name. In his writings, as in his life, there were fine externals, but on a foundation not so fine ; there were dignity and facility, but not much originality of reflection ; there was the varnish of truth, but few new truths. But if we read his essays more for their manner than for their matter, we cannot deny that the manner is very agreeable ; and we cannot forget that he was one of the pioneers of the literary style which has graced the works of all our modern authors. Fashion has had its minor changes ; some few words have become obsolete, some few constructions archaic, and some of what Stevenson called the finite and rigid blocks in the mosaic of our mother-tongue have taken

on different hues ; but the prose style of Temple is still very much akin to that of the twentieth century. Some advances have been made in the sovereign prose quality of limpidity, and we may not be able to follow Swift in his statement that the author of the essay on Gardening had advanced our English tongue to as near perfection as it could well bear ; but we must remember that he was one of the first to give cadence to our language, that he was one of the first great exponents of the 'genteel style' which Lamb praises so delightfully, and that if he did not teach Addison and his compeers to write pure and simple English, he at any rate taught the public to be ready for them.

But while Temple's writings delight and surprise us chiefly by their modern tone ; while his efforts in literature, like those in diplomacy and speculative politics, derive their chief value in our eyes from the promises to posterity which they contain ; still, we must not underestimate their intrinsic worth. Where Temple is writing well within his range, where he is using his knowledge of the times, his experience in diplomacy, and his powers of observation, he will receive the praise of present men of letters, as he received the praise of contemporary politicians and peoples. His letters and memoirs are models of their kind, and his 'Observations on the United Provinces' deservedly gained him a high reputation, though they contain the curious error of describing at length the causes of a fall which did not take place. But when Temple found that he could win applause for everything he wrote, he thought he could write on everything and still win applause. This led him into waters too deep for him, and endangered his fame ; for if a man who is not a scholar gives a public lecture on scholarship, presuming entirely on his genteel appear-

ance and elegant delivery, there will be trouble—if there is a Bentley among the audience.

Even where he tried himself too highly, however, Temple's work was not altogether without value. Though he was not very profound, he at any rate turned his knowledge to good account; though his thoughts were not very striking, they were at any rate generally just; while some of the remarks which appear superficial and trite to us were probably quite unfamiliar to his own generation.

He had, too, a goodly share of common-sense and mother-wit, and though his essays on Government, on Heroic Virtue, and on Poetry may be more suited to the drawing-room than to the study, they contain some not unsound reasoning. His conclusions have been in most cases refuted or excelled, but now and again they have been applauded and adopted. His most serious errors he owed to his vanity. He was enough of a pedant to wish to gain foolish admiration on the principle of 'Scire tuum nihil est nisi te scire hoc sciat alter,' and by dragging in allusions to bygone or mythical heroes he deluded himself and most of his readers into the idea that he knew a good deal of a subject on which he was profoundly ignorant.

His 'Essay upon the Ancient and Modern Learning' sprang out of the famous, but rather futile, controversy which began in France with Perrault and Fontenelle. Temple took the side of the ancients, and his theory—so far as he had any consistent theory—seems to have been that moderns gained all their knowledge from books at the Universities, and that those who trust to the charity of others will always be poor. To the man who had learnt little philosophy and no Greek at Cambridge, and who yet wished to write on any and every subject, the

exaltation of invention over learning would naturally appeal ; but when he proceeded to trespass into the domain which he affected to despise, when he pointed his arguments for the ancients with references to the dusty back-files of literature of which he barely knew the headlines, and when his lead was followed by the almost equally ignorant doctors of Christ Church, a real scholar was constrained to break silence. Temple possibly intended his essay for a *jeu d'esprit* rather than a critical work, and in the ensuing storm of discussion on the subject of the letters of Phalaris his own voice was fortunately drowned ; but Bentley spoke of him irreverently, his vanity was hurt, and Swift came to his rescue with the immortal 'Battle of the Books.'

The raw secretary from Ireland, who spent his time at Moor Park reading in Temple's library, arranging and transcribing Temple's works, and flirting with the future 'Stella,' had too piercing an insight into shams of all kinds to hold any great opinion of a showy writer who set too high a value upon his real merits ; but Swift's own contempt for pedantry urged him to the defence of his patron. His triumphant piece of wit is the most enduring relic of this famous controversy, but it really weakened the side on which the writer had engaged. Swift could not help himself. The ancients could show no such humour or satire as the 'Tale of a Tub' and the 'Battle of the Books.'

It is pleasant to pass from where Temple weakens our admiration to where he increases it. The Letter to the Countess of Essex shows him at his best, and its noble words of consolation, expressed in the most stately rhetoric, will always find it an honoured place amongst the consecrated passages of English prose. In his essay

on Gardening, too, he was helped by the inspiration of a genuine love for his subject. He was not a scientific botanist, indeed, any more than he was a scholar or a competent critic, but he discoursed very fluently and gracefully on the 'contrivance and plantation of gardens'; on the 'fruits, flowers, shades, fountains, and the music of birds that frequent such happy places'; and on the green walks and airy terraces of 'the pleasantest figure of a garden I ever saw.' But in this essay there is more than graceful descriptions of famous pleasaunces, and courtly advice on the choice and culture of the happy apple. It treats of the beauties of a life in retirement, of the Latin poets who sang their sweetest songs in the seclusion of the country, and of the Greek philosophers who sought the happiness of virtue amid the quiet trees and the verdure of plants. It was written with the absence of restraint of a writer who was absorbed in his theme, and it reveals to us the writer himself—his hopes, his fears, and his ideals. The essay on Gardening may fitly be used to illustrate the character of the gardener.

Temple defended Epicurus, and he did so the more naturally because he himself sought the *summum bonum* of the Greek philosopher. 'When factions were once ended and rooted in a State, they thought it madness for good men to muddle with public affairs,' is what he wrote; and to retire to Sheen when the agitations of Parliament grew too strong for his comfort was what he did. 'The true service of the public is a business of so much labour and so much care, that though a good man may not refuse it, if he be called to it by his Prince or his country, and thinks he may be more than vulgar use, yet he will seldom or never seek it'; and Temple was as constant in his endeavours to avoid the turmoil of the

political world as he was irresolute when he had once entered it.

He had, indeed, much of the weakness as well as much of the strength of his models. He showed their weakness in his lack of courage and enthusiasm, in his want of robustness in mind and temperament, and in his disinclination to endanger his reputation in the desperate game when politicians threw away their consciences as encumbrances. This makes him appear somewhat cold and selfish, and has laid him open to the charge of having preferred to guard his personal honour rather than the honour of his country. It made his associates, men of sterner stuff, rather despise him as a man who put his own safety before everything ; who would swim in placid waters, but would prefer to stay on the bank rather than breast an angry torrent ; who would keep true to his friends in prosperity, but risk nothing for them in adversity ; who would never join dangerous factions, but would also never openly oppose them. Halifax probably had his exemplary but cautious friend in mind when he wrote the maxim, ' He that leaveth nothing to chance will do few things ill, but he will do very few things.' Temple did very few things. Good fortune and his own discernment made him famous as the chief author of the Triple Alliance ; his sincerely held political theories caused him to help in a highly applauded, though ill-fated, attempt to smooth the relations between Crown and Parliament ; but at the first contact with dangers and difficulties he retired, like Epicurus, to his garden.

A minor weakness is also illustrated in this essay. Temple's vanity is never obtrusive, but is always present—a courtly kind of vanity which almost seems to suit his distinguished manner ; a vanity which made

him egotistical as a diplomat, and sensitive to slights and indifference at Court ; a vanity which made him in early life somewhat affected in his disclaimers of ability, and in later years somewhat tenacious of his dignity ; a vanity which makes him here complacently compare himself with some of the greatest men of old, and makes him complacently accept, at their literal value, all the praises which had been accorded to his 'peaches and apricocks.'

But if Temple had some of the weakness of Epicurus, he had also some of his strength. 'Goodness' may be compatible with selfishness, but it has some value in itself. If he was overcareful in guarding his reputation as a diplomat, he had gained that reputation by his frankness and honesty. If he was overcautious in his public position, he had gained that position because of his character for sincerity. We might excuse him for retiring from the muddy path of politics, if we remember that he was forced into it against his will, and saw no way of making it clean ; we must praise him for living purely in an age of vice, for living honestly in an age of corruption, and for winning general esteem by his integrity in an age where eminence and profligacy generally went together.

'I stand always upon the ground of never having done an unjust or an ungentlemanly action in my life, or an unfaithful one to the service of my master or my country.' This was a proud boast to make in the reign of Charles II., but it was not an unjustifiable one.

The early Epicureans 'would have no part in the faults of a Government, for the nature and passions of men made them incapable of any that was perfect and good' ; and to keep himself unspotted from the political

world was the not altogether unworthy aim of the subject of our essay.

Their leader passed his life wholly in his garden ; and under a sundial in his own favourite garden at Moor Park was buried in 1699, by his own wish, the heart of Sir William Temple, statesman, author, and Epicurean.

He had many failings ; he had more virtues ; and most students of his life and works will be content to use as his epitaph the description he himself wrote of his model philosopher—‘ Whose admirable wit, felicity of expression, excellence of nature, sweetness of conversation, temperance of life and constancy of death, made him so beloved of his friends, admired by his scholars, and honoured by the Athenians.’



THE END

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